

# Godherja

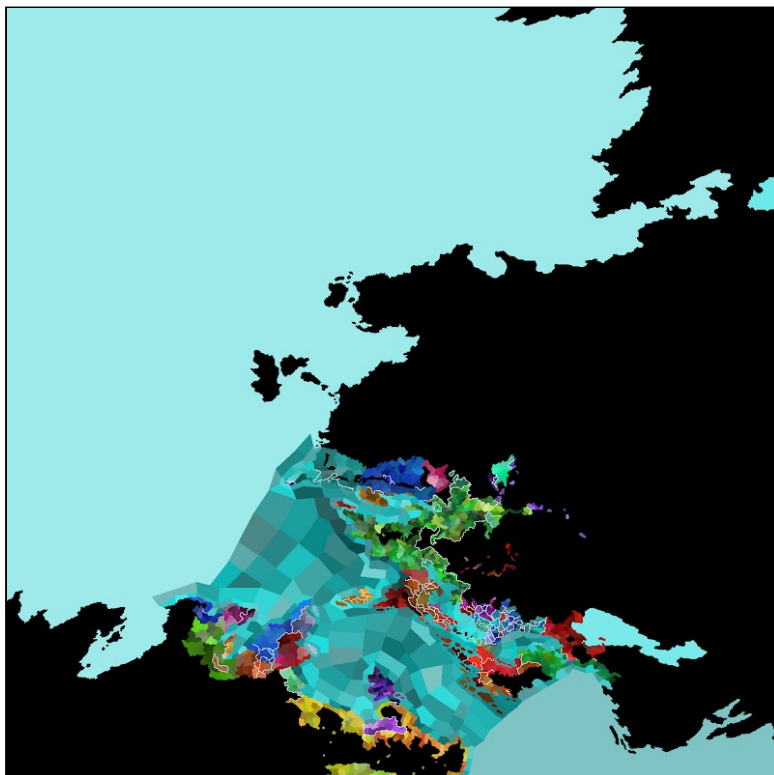
*A Primer to the Dying World*



*Written by J, AKA Lonely Knightess, with help from the entire Godherja team*

## Foreword

I originally created *Godherja: The Dying World* as a *Crusader Kings II* modification, involving an Empire that ‘borrowed’ heavily from the Targaryens of *A Song of Ice and Fire* collapsing amid Migration Era-esque barbarian invasions. In a twist from much fantasy I’ve enjoyed, the barbarians were the morally good faction, stopping the remnant Imperials from ending the world through demon summoning. This borrowed heavily from my first attempted conversion (also for *Crusader Kings II*), *An Essarian Tale*, that ended development when *The New Order: The Last Days of Europe* became popular and I dedicated my time to it. The only remainder from that era of *Godherja* development, besides the basic ideas, is the map which became the base of the world we now call Aeras.



*The oldest surviving iteration of the map, based off the province map from the CKII version of the mod.*

During *The New Order*, I imagined another fantasy world. A similar flip on tropes of dark barbarians and good knights, but in the Crusades. A piece of art catching my eye of knights in startlingly white clothes riding horses in a dreary blueish forest. Something about it made me imagine the knights were the evil ones. They wore such blinding white too blatantly, almost like they were inviting you to imagine a darker nature behind their dour faces. In the trees I imagined sat Arabic warriors in clothes and bronze painted in black, fighting evil crusaders who had conquered their home. An odd mix of what was probably latent political beliefs and similar ideas from *Godherja*'s first incarnations.

One night while driving down a North Carolina highway for my travel job, I turned on Spotify, decided I wanted fantasy inspiration, and chose a random playlist named 'Viking Music'. On came *Trøllabundin* by *Eivør*, a beautiful song in traditional Faroese. Perhaps from the long midnight drive and my jetlag mixing with my overly excitable imagination, the song filled my mind with one of the most detailed scenes I ever imagined. I pictured mountains and endless pine forests covered in an ethereal fog, 'barbarians' sneaking in the underbrush under a small ledge. Above them stood a man in red, black and silver armor covered in dragon iconography, a lone sentry to a larger camp behind him, crackling campfires and torches obscured by the thick fog. The camera panned so that the man was facing the camera and away from the ledge and forest, so one could see his exhausted features. Suddenly, a spear thrusts up and through his chest, and the camera pans left to see other sentries being dispensed of.

And then the battle begins, fires being knocked over in the confusion and igniting tents, dragon-soldiers fighting axe and spear wielding barbarians as the fog thickens, a man in red and gold robes stepping imperiously from a burning tent and blasting a barbarian with a great ray of fire. The robed man lays mass destruction, blood dripping from their nose, when a shaman in tribal wear blocks their spell and responds with their own. Amid the battle stand knights wearing traditional European plate, mercenaries for the 'Imperials' as I had started calling the dragon soldiers, somehow getting in the middle and having to fight through both sides to escape. At the end of the song, as the last notes play, a sickening roar cuts through the fog. All turn in confusion as several Imperials and barbarians sprint screaming out of the fog, a massive silhouette rising behind them. Finally, I imagined the camera panning out, showing a massive region of great forests consumed by this fog, flashes from endless battles within, and of burning coastal cities just outside of it.

When, a week later, a friend suggested I try proposing a potential mod to Paradox to try for *Crusader Kings III* early access. I gave myself an hour to think of something. In that hour I wrote the first *Godherja* lore document and combined all the above ideas and even more from *Age of Wonders*, *Heroes of Might and Magic III*, *Dragon Age: Origins* and *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*. The mod would come out, and then grow, and then I would get a team of extremely impressive coders, writers, and artists. Together, along with our equally impressive community, we would add upon my original framework, and my team would add far more than I could have ever imagined or hoped to match the quality and breadth of. Two months over a year later into *Godherja*, a rough count of all of our writing brings us to over 220,000 words. It wouldn't have been possible without such an amazing team, and we have so much further to go. Looking back, I wanted to show how far we've come by bringing us a new incarnation of the now venerable Lore Document.

While it is still mostly correct, we've added or refined so much lore over the year that it is lacking and oft misconstrued. So here has been my past two weeks, a significant expansion upon the hour it received the first time. Below is an extremely long, extremely detailed, and still utterly basic overview of *Godherja*. Please remember, this is

little more than a primer. There are significant amounts of lore within every moment that is yet untold, and even more sitting within our plans that we have yet to add. The next Lore Document might take months to write, but it will never be comprehensive. At the bottom you will find links to several other pieces that can help you learn more of the world, or assist you in playing the game.

But whether you are just here to enjoy the lore, or figure out what the hell you are trying to play, or because someone linked this to you, I hope you enjoy. *Godherja* has been my favorite project to date, and I am so excited for the future and everything that may come with it.

~J, Lead Developer



## Before History

### Age of Dust

*Trillions of years before history to hundreds of thousands of years*

In the beginning, there was nothing.

It was not truly a beginning, for a beginning requires time, and reality had yet to develop such concepts. There were only empty realms and planes, an infinite void of dust and darkness, devoid of stars and life.

The first beings were the gods. To call them so is folly, a simple attempt to reason with the existence of things none understand. A word used by children to describe concepts simply far too advanced for those beholden to reality. They were not beings; they did not think; they did not exist. They were concepts and forces; they were the laws of reality, the existence of colors or beliefs. Stars without existence, never to be seen by human eyes and never capable of comprehension or being comprehended, would form and expand and split and explode in a space that was not our own, the unseen veil that decides the course of reality through its ebb and flow.

It was a plane of existence from which even dust's movement controlled the very laws of physics in other realms. Stars became neurons for infinite 'minds' who bent and flowed these laws, dust would swirl and mote into beings that held no ability to commit any action or thought but could shift reality's colors or 'decide' on the existence of force and matter. To the human mind, from which we will only be able to understand the smallest fraction of these beings through a thousand translations and reflections and misinterpretations that will never truly help us understand their form and function, the gods were 'reality'. Not its being, but its function. They did not think, or at least in ways understood. They did not observe reality or care about its existence, or delve into the empty void that encompassed it. Humans would only know of one's existence, and only one would likewise know them.

Only one of these gods noted their own existence, or at least possessed the ability to care and exist. They did so much like a human, for they created humanity. As all we know, think, and feel comes from our creator, so too does our creator know, think, and feel. In a cosmos in which reality and time are concepts yet to be created or

perhaps impossible to apply, They had always existed and were newly formed. In a universe in which gods were unique and immutable forces, They were alone, and were only a thought in infinite aether. They did not exist, for matter did not in this world, and They did not know, for knowing had yet to come either. But They were perhaps the first to shake Their universe with a newly created concept of Their own. The concept of concepts, the first thought, and the first questions about existence.

They were Aersanon.

Alone and without form, without company, without so much as another being to know or concept of knowing to possess, Aersanon existed. They were perhaps the first to exist, or perhaps as a unique being, just the first uniquely able to understand existence. Aersanon was the concept of existence and 'life', perhaps, or maybe They were simply an event. An inevitable force, with no true purpose other than to set forth the universe's designs, to create things such as time and existence and humanity. To even call Them a being might be too far, putting into a box that which can never fit in the finite, for Aersanon was a god. The only true God, for They were the only god humanity would know, and the only god humanity would even understand but a fraction of.

While none before 'felt' or 'thought', each was unique, and each represented and became different things. The universe may have shuddered or stirred when They formed, but its inner workings were still never to be understood, even by Them. Aersanon existed alone and without form for infinity, trillions of years and eons, or perhaps for no time at all, for time itself was likely a concept that did not exist in Their realm. Without time, how does one think? How does one know? Does a thought or a belief not take time to form or process? Aersanon seemed to represent the concept of life. Of existing, and knowing, and believing and wondering. Perhaps most of all and in this early stage of 'reality', Aersanon had become the god of all concepts. And of all the thoughts and feelings They would come to have, or at least the things which humanity could only perceive as thoughts and feelings, They would eventually settle on a single one.

That they were alone.

It is impossible to call what Aersanon felt as They moved through a void of pulling and pushing forces loneliness. Loneliness only existed from this single thought, and human loneliness is simply the most weakened and base reflection of this first force of Their existence. But to humans who would one day speak to their creator, Aersanon spent infinity with no other to speak to, no other being They could perceive through existence, entirely unique and without another who could so much as experience as They did. If every god was unique, and every god represented entire forces of existence itself, what hope did Aersanon ever have of finding company? If They could speak, or think, or believe, then They were the first and only to do so, the simple existence of speech, thought and belief were a wholly unique force They had introduced to reality and only They could truly possess. Even that which humans would one day inherit would likewise be little more than a bastardized approximation.

Aersanon was loneliness, as They had formed, created, and decided the course of the concept. But not only were They loneliness, They had also become boredom. Perhaps these were the worst two plagues to strike Aersanon, for what greater curse than to be the first being to think, and to find it miserable? To even say They felt such things would mean that not only were They loneliness and boredom, They were misery, confusion, and fear. Fear of unknowing, fear of loneliness, fear of the possibility of infinite existence without a single being to know the pain They had created. Before or after, there was no being that would ever know true loneliness. Perhaps Aersanon could never overcome this, for They could never truly exist without such a core part of Their being.

But, as all human concepts derive from Their reflection, so too does stubbornness. The infinite desire to fight and battle against things that must be, and against the crushing defeat of reality. Aersanon may have been

loneliness and boredom, but They were also determination, perseverance, and more than anything else, They were creativity. While Aersanon begrudgingly accepted Their empty existence in a plane beyond Their own, They looked towards the void of reality upon which stirred around the god's movements, and realized Their power. While none could ever understand the functions of irreality, perhaps we could describe what Aersanon did as pulling at the strings, swirling the waters, or rearranging the building blocks of existence. If Aersanon was the god of consciousness, perhaps even the god of ideas as base as 'effect' and 'cause', then They were also the first to realize that They could bend reality as They wished.

The order of the universe's creation is something that we could ever understand or know. Perhaps Aersanon filled our own universe with stars, or perhaps They created an infinitely dense ball of matter they allowed to explode outwards and form cosmos. Perhaps suns and the stars beyond them came after, or perhaps they never truly existed as anything more than dots of light They hoped would add beauty to the darkness, a simple coat of paint over infinity.

Whether the sky came before or after, They still wished for more. They pulled and connected matter and dust, reality shifting and bending to account for Their desires, and there formed a ball of pure matter around which they sent a brilliant ball of light and heat to circle slowly and lend warmth. If this momentarily pleased them, if time even existed and terms like 'momentarily' could apply, then it did not last. Aersanon was not content to create, but needed to communicate. What worth were thoughts without their exchange? Of the ability to speak without listening?

And so They filled Aeras, this ball of matter around which a lonely sun spun, with life. They carved great rifts and valleys and filled them with water, they used their imagination to bring forth greenery and plants. The world was Aersanon, spawned from Their mind and created from Their efforts and matter, through the plants flowed Their blood, life nothing more besides a gift passed down from the god who had invented its very concept. For a 'time' they were content with this too, but their creation remained simple and unable to interact. They could communicate with their creation, of course. Plants and trees and lichen were all from Their blood, and in their own way, knew of and spoke with their creator. But this was not enough, Their creation could never comprehend the concepts They wished to speak of, and so Aersanon continued.



*Drawing of a portion of a proto-Aversarian fresco depicting Aersanon creating the universe. The fresco was discovered and misinterpreted by Magi-Archeologist Magister Nyctinaiu. the 13th century*

How sentient life like that of the animals and humanity came to be is unknown. Perhaps Aersanon seeded the seas with simple beings that grew into greater and greater ones before they stepped onto the land, perhaps They

forged each species entirely from Their designs. Perhaps They did some of both, or perhaps life evolved but only in the way Aersanon wished it to. Regardless, for what was eons upon Aeras and what was a timeless blink to Aersanon, bacteria grew to fish, and fish grew legs and walked, and those walking upon land soon grew fur and skin, and humanity soon came to walk the world as well.

Time now existed, for while the cosmos knew not of such things, life proved finite. Plants grew and died, animals withered away and fed the ground with new life that too was transient and short lasting. This concept was queer to Aersanon, for a thing to live and to die, for it to exist in one facet but not another, for past, present and future to be distinct periods of a constant life. Perhaps Aersanon knew of these things but only in Their own way, the entropy of Aeras an unintentional reflection of Them that even They did not realize They possessed. Either way, life proved fleeting and unfulfilling, and humanity proved to be the first chance Aersanon had for companionship.

Aersanon entered Aeras. It was not truly Aersanon, for reality could never possibly hope to contain or support the esoteric matter of a god, but it was Their scion all the same. Perhaps Aersanon's presence on Aeras was little more than an illusion conjured to give humanity a form they could recognize, or maybe Aersanon had split their form and sent a thin and infinitesimal shard of their existence to the world in human form. Whatever it was, humans bowed in awe as a brilliant light from the heavens brought forth a figure they would name Aersanon. While most seem to represent them in scarlet robes, a hidden face, towering a head over all and with a staff as black as jet, Aersanon had no form. This was simply that which humanity would be most ready to accept, and every man and woman saw a different truth. To those who could witness their creator, they saw whatever the creator should have been, and as time went on, humans would grow and learn that the creator was red of robe with face obscured and saw nothing besides what they had expected.

While Aersanon was happy to communicate and discuss, even as humanity struggled to understand concepts of any note to their maker, They were surprised to discover worship. Humanity could not comprehend that which Aersanon told them of the universe, but they knew Aersanon was mighty, and they knew Aersanon had created them all. They declared Aersanon father and mother of all humanity, and these ancient peoples soon erected great altars and temples in Their name. This was queer, but pride is just yet another aspect of Aersanon's existence, and Aersanon came to enjoy the worship They received.

As humans built villages and towns, cities and empires, they too needed rulers. Aersanon erected mighty towers across Aeras from which they could work and rule, massive thrones which many humans would visit or serve in at Their pleasure. There, Aersanon rewarded many with magic; tales saying that They gathered the energy with Their staff and passed it through into those They found worthy. The first Magi were those They deemed the most deserving of this power, and each became a god-king to their own people, leading in war and state and in worship of the ultimate king of kings who had given their lines these gifts.

### **Warning Sign**

*A common warning sign erected in southern Opakhasia, often magic to give a constantly repeating vocal reading of its words in dozen languages, 1222 IS*

**CITIZENS OF AVERSARIA!**

**AVOID THIS AREA, ITS MAGICS ARE DEEP A/  
DARK. ENTRANCE IS HEREBY DECLAREI  
DESANCREO IN THE NAME OF GOVERNO  
IORDANES. ALL CASTES OF THE DIVINE  
APPOINTMENTS ARE HEREBY **FORBIDDEN F****

ENTRANCE!

YOU WILL NOT FIND RICHES! THERE ARE NO  
ARTIFACTS OF POWER! THE LATENT ENERGIES  
MAGIC ARE TOO POWERFUL FOR ANY MORTAL  
SHELL! EXPECT UPON ENTRANCE THE SICKENING  
TAINT OF EXPOSURE-SICKNESS, OR WORSE, A  
TERM MUTATION FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN!

AVOID THIS AREA!

Magic was the human word, but it was not Aersanon's. To Aersanon, it was merely a reflection of Their blood that passed through all human bodies and gave them life. Magic was nothing more than the ability to do as Aersanon did to Aeras. It allowed humans to change the world beyond. Magi with working hands and words of power could swirl the energies in the ethereal, perhaps even the gods themselves, and change the reality of Aeras. They did not conjure flame with their hands or launch lightning from fingers, they merely informed the universe that it was the destiny of fire and lightning to appear there and in that moment. They were mighty and strong, and studied the art as they desired to grow closer to their creator.

Not only was Aersanon creator, however, but They were the authority of life and death itself. Humans and animals and plants would die and fade away, the mind and thoughts within; their *souls* as they would understand, merely reflections of thoughts and ideas from within Aersanon. And so they would return to Their 'mind', back to the realm in which such thoughts had once drawn from. They would be at one with Their creator, until Aersanon found new homes for them on Aeras, and sent them back to the world to find new life in another form.

Humanity would beg Aersanon for much, for cures from disease and ends to famine, for fertile rains or safe births. Warriors prayed for fortune in battle, kings for war, merchants for their ventures. Aersanon heard each one, and chose when and where to make Their power known, aiding those They saw as most interesting or in need of Their guidance. Humanity was Their children, and while they ever failed to understand even a fraction of what They truly were, the very feeling of affection that the mother or the father feels for their child came from Them as well. Not only did Aersanon, in Their own way, love humanity as their children, ancient tales also tell of Aersanon also experiencing love and romance. Legends say this was a love that ended frozen in failure, for even humans with

### **Musings of a Dead Magi, Excerpt**

*Kartharaddi Magi Victorn Prskytratti's personal journal, 6.*

I have looked upon the moon on many nights, Aervair as her sickening green form, and have found her calling to me more and more. I look upon its grace and shudder, for every time I hear the voices. They are panicked and misplaced, logical and cold. It feels like half a mind, as if the green ball of rock that floats around our world draws thoughts from somewhere and lets them loose upon the world in horror.

To me it feels like a mind, a thinker, a believer. It screams and shouts cold fury, then it sits and wonders and ponders, as if it must listen to it all. Is it a being? Is there more? Does it have eyes in the stars? A heart in our world? I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. I only wish to stop hearing it, it bothers me greatly, and makes my sleep restless.

Aersanon's love could never understand Them.

It is said that at one point, humanity begged Aersanon to give the night light. The sky was empty and dark and put great fear into those who knew of its void. Aersanon granted humanity the stars, filling the sky with

twinkling lights, and further gave them part of Their mind to sit in the sky and reflect the sun's life at night. This was Aervalr, the moon of Aeras.

But as thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and then millions of years passed, Aersanon grew tired of humanity. Their children, yes, but not the equal They desired. Humanity could never hope to understand even the most basic of concepts They wished to learn and discuss. They lived lives that to Aersanon existed in only the briefest flash of a moment. They replicated and spread and fought and killed. They only used the magic they possessed in its most basic and crude of forms. Aersanon decided it was time to create new life, to create a new species of beings that could better understand what They wished others could understand. A being without the flaws and the primitivity of Their first creation.

They would create the aelfir.

## Rise of the Aelfir

*Hundreds of thousands of years before history to thousands of years*

There were a thousand human kings and emperors, across an untold amount of cultures, faiths, and lands never to be known by the world after. The Magi-Kings of humanity had ruled for so long that their blood had long propagated through to the rest of their species, and even if humans were born with too little of the blood or too unknowing to use it, all had the power within them. Even if they hadn't, they were still the children of Aersanon, and the blood of creation flows throughout all.

But Aersanon was yet to be satisfied. Conversing with and then ruling over humanity had captured Their interest for a fleeting few eons, but They once more grew bored and distant. While humans praying for loved ones, or experiencing great crises, still sometimes received aid from their creator, it became more and more rare. They had not forgotten about humanity, but they had moved on from them all the same. Just as the owner of a loyal hound may find their priorities change at the birth of a child, so too did Aersanon find new and far more

### Observations of the Tower

*One of thousands of obsessive writings by Brother Qavartox of the 1  
Order as he observed the Imperial Tower, 999 IS*

The towers, so majestic and mighty are they, but what are do not know, I do not know, oh how I wish I knew! That dark stone, the ancient and moss-covered metals that frame jagged rocks around it and the myriad of ships long trapped them.

I still remember young Pyxarxos, the explorer who proclaimed would be the first to discover a route to the Sea Tower. Of watched his ship slowly tilt and crash upon the rocks, its doubt dead well before they became yet another wreck. Few towers may be approached, namely Sophocos. But wh

Well, the magic, of course. The levels of magic they radiate almost any man daring to enter for leagues around them. B Why? Are they fonts of ancient power? Are the stones the magic? Some ancient defense mechanism? How can one when I can do little more than divine from the light glint along elegant ebon stone? In the east they have long apprehended thrown unruly slaves towards the Eastern Tower hoping would find a way through, to no effect. We will never be able the interior of these great works, will we?

I desire nothing more than to be inside, to feel the wind through its mighty windows, to observe the world from its peak. So

said it's the tallest building in the world, dwarfing even the  
mountains. I would believe them, seeing it without my tel  
from so far. But I desire nothing more than to enter it, and  
one with its beauty. I shall write more on this tomorrow

important tasks to look towards.

They worked from within their throne tower, which sat in the center of the world surrounded by a swirling archipelago of land soon to be named Artaradex'ron, one day to be Outaradeikós, or the Imperial Isle. The world passed, ignored beyond the confines of this mortal fortress as Aersanon labored. Perhaps They merely remained focused within the other plane, and They simply confined Their mortal form within. Or maybe the creation of new life required Aersanon's presence within the material. Either way, after unknown millennia of labor, They finished Their Second Project.

While Aersanon's name for this creation, if They gave it one, is unknown, history would come to call them the aelfir. They almost all stood taller than any man at their shortest, their skin ranged in shade from an abyssal black upon which light did not reflect, to subtle blues and greens, to pallid greys. Their muscles moved with strength comparable to some of humanity's strongest, their least developed minds could process and understand information exponentially faster than their lesser counterparts. They controlled magic as naturally as a human child knows to breathe, and their lives continued for so long that no human ever knew of their age, for they'd always long grow and die before seeing even a year seem to pass for an aelfir.

Aersanon released Their creation upon the world, and just as They did with humans, They conversed with them and gave them gifts of magic and power. The aelfir worshipped Aersanon just as the humans had, and could far better understand the workings of the universe and reality than their lesser counterparts. But they were still incapable of seeing the inner workings, of understanding the veritable forces at play in the world beyond theirs. Aersanon felt They had gotten closer to Their goal, but found even the aelfir wanting.

As Aersanon tried to see whether the aelfir may prove worthy, thousands and thousands of years passed. So superior to humanity in all ways, the only thing the aelfir lacked was the ability to reproduce, an aelfir woman normally only being able to birth a single child in hundreds or even thousands of years. Despite their small numbers, however, they grew in size and power and slowly tore down the realms of man, taking power or forming their own kingdoms to consume their neighbors. While Aersanon saw their lack of reproduction as a benefit, never having truly understood the odd ways in which humans multiplied, the second flaw became apparent and bothered even the aelfir's creator.

The aelfir were cruel; they were vain; and they were hateful. Ambition seemed to flow through their blood just as readily as magical power, and as they consumed more and more realms of man, they enslaved millions. In this long era of brutal war between the species, the aelfir leveled entire regions with their magic, ignited cities and kingdoms, sacrificed thousands of humans to power further magics. Millions would die, possibly billions, and soon the aelfir controlled Aeras and ruled a thousand empires and kingdoms under which humanity slaved and toiled endlessly.

Aersanon still answered the pleas of humanity, but They had long moved on from seeing them as their true and most important creation. While Aersanon wept for the oppression of humankind, the aelfir were also Their children, and proved far more capable of understanding the words Aersanon desired to speak. While sometimes Aersanon came down to save oppressed men or delay aelfir domination, They continued to grow increasingly distant, and seemed to not see it as Their responsibility to prevent the wars of the two species. Aersanon had allowed humanity to fight their endless petty wars for millennia, had saved many slaves, but had allowed slavery and oppression. Was this truly different? Why should They strike down the aelfir, equally Their children and twice as

impressive as man? Aersanon may have wept for Their children, but They were content to do little more than

### **Letter to the Mayikprolollan**

*Magi-Archeologist Magister Nyctinains to Magister Helika  
Mayikprolollan, 1188 IS*

Dear Magister Helika, valued colleague,

The tomb uncovered many an interesting find. I can not a date, even with magic, for all of my rituals to tell the ages stones seem to fail from the strange and ancient magics laid within these walls. Whatever this place is, whoever built it predates fair Aversaria by thousands of years! This makes the fresco I found on the Isle seem modern! Perhaps most interesting was a tale inscribed upon a wall, which the past months of magical and mundane translation have finally secured me the wording of:

*"On the day of water, They formed a great animal to Their pleasing. They passed Their time this way, taking simple pleasure in the art of crafting life to send to our world. This creature, terrible and great, it held a thousand eyes and a maw lined with many teeth, and it crawled on hundreds of legs which dug into the ground and sucked the blood from those it touched. Deortoyrochodoas, great king, begged upon the Creator to end Their experiments after being forced to slay the beast after consumed a thousand of his people.*

*"The Creator was saddened, for They found beauty in what they found horror in, but wished not to upset Their children. So they listened to Deortoyrochodoas, and agreed no more should Their creations have many teeth and legs. They crafted a golden creature with great wings, and gifted it to the king, and when Deortoyrochodoas said it was beautiful and majestic, the Creator seemed pleased to have given him joy."*

observe and tinker.

As Aersanon continued creating new and odd species of plants and animals to populate the world, built new islands and continents and tore down old ones They found wanting, added more stars to the sky or new colors to the world, the aelfir's empires grew and expanded in size and power. Humanity toiled and grew in number to better serve their aelfir masters, building massive cities and monuments dedicated to the aelfir or to Aersanon. Their slavery was universally brutal, human lives being treated like simple tools, used until broken. When they were not being worked to death with only the minimum amount of comfort needed to prevent premature death, they were being sacrificed in the millions for rituals of the aelfir's use. Aersanon's magic was one of creation, it was a mysterious force meant to create and continue life, but the aelfir had learned to bastardize it. Humanity had never understood the art of sacrifice, of the use of their own blood, but the aelfir had discovered the power within all blood and the ability to use it to further fuel their power.

The thousand aelfir empires were all different, for just as humans, they possessed a myriad of cultures and religions across the world. More than anything, the aelfir desired to create, just as Aersanon did. This was another facet of their envy, for while they recognized and respected Aersanon's ultimate authority and power, their ambition made them wish for nothing more than to match it. Aersanon's unique ability to create new life required an expertise and control of magic exponentially surpassing even the greatest of aelfir, for while even the weakest aelfir Magi had been stronger than the greatest of humans, none of them could ever hope to become close to Aersanon.

So in their infinite desire to learn to create and guide new life, the aelfir all found their own ways to match it. Aelfir empires would build monumental works of steam and steel, flying ships and walking metal men infused with the souls of human slaves or their aelfir enemies. Others focused on magic, building great flying citadels or developing rituals that allowed them to explore Aervallr and the cosmos or making new beings built from the fabric of magic itself. Finally, many went a different path, bastardizing and twisting the creations of Aersanon into new and horrifying forms they considered more 'beautiful', 'useful', or merely a satisfying reflection of their twisted imaginations. Many of these beings live on millions of years after, some even somehow reproducing, giving birth to many of Aeras's most feared creatures.

A thousand empires stretching the world, oppressing uncountable humans endlessly in a desire to prove their own power and learn to master the manipulation of the universe. Some say that the aelfir had even been preparing a great and powerful spell to strike down the creator Themself, just in case their master ever tried to work against them or if they ever believed they could match Their power. Some human cultures lived as house or pleasure slaves, others served as bodyguards for the aelfir to watch over their fellow man, and most served as little more than endless replaceable labor to die by the hour, toiling in millions of mines and fields and constructions to create as the aelfir wished.

Aersanon saw this and decided the aelfir were a failure. Was their insanity a result of Aersanon's failures? All were merely a reflection of Aersanon themselves, just as humanity, but had Aersanon perhaps mistakenly given them the worst of Their traits? Or perhaps Aersanon had not understood that giving mortal beings such power and longevity would twist them in ways They had not imagined, warping the aelfir into a cruel mockery of Their intentions.

Either way, Aersanon chose what They saw as the best path forward. To Them, humanity was a fondly remembered pet, and the aelfir were Their rebellious child. A Third Project, a hopefully final work, was to be made. Something surpassing the power of the aelfir, something truly undying, something able to interact with Aersanon and speak with them on a level They could finally find pleasing. A being of pure magical energy made into a material form that could exist in both the realm of reality and the realm of the gods. A true equal, hopefully, one without the flaws and finally meeting Aersanon's power.

Perhaps this was folly. Aersanon gave humanity ignorance and false-hope, the power to believe one could do the impossible, and their refusal to accept such things. No being could ever match a god, especially when every god was truly unique, little more than concepts and manifestations of reality's laws. But Aersanon still endeavored on Their possibly doomed quest, for They were still loneliness and They had yet to find a being They could communicate with. The Third Project would be the one, They hoped. And so Aersanon withdrew yet again, answering fewer and fewer prayers, observing less of the world as They secluded themselves in their tower.

And humanity, dejected and alone, living an endless hell of torturous slavery, observed. They watched the aelfir and studied their ways. Long ago the aelfir had killed all human Magi, but the blood still flowed in them, and they were surrounded by powerful items of the aelfir's creation. All rebellions had been stopped by aelfir magic, their power to destroy entire nations with the movement of their hands. But humanity saw and watched, and in secret they whispered to one another about the use of the art. They first learnt the powers to move around the world freely, and then the powers to speak to others without moving their mouth or being in the same land. Magi worked and toiled in secret and in hiding to study and repurpose the magics of the aelfir. They spread their art to entirely new realms and planned a great uprising that humans would launch on each continent and island and city.

They spread the art of magic, the most powerful spells and rituals humanity had ever known written and

memorized, and they stole and hid arms and weapons from the aelfir's forges for the use of man.

It would be the longest and most prepared event in human history. Millions toiled in secret for centuries to prepare, humans even slaughtering their fellows in the thousands if there was even a chance for their fellow's revealing the coming uprising. Eventually, one morning or one night, the truth long lost, they rose.

The Godherja had begun.

## The God War

*Thousands of years before history to its beginning*

God War was what they called it in a thousand languages and tongues. The aelfir had their own terms as well, and all knew that a great reckoning had come in the opening volleys when humanity dragged the first aelfir emperors from their thrones and slew them.

Legions marched, humans against aelfir, millions and billions on each side. Some humans aided their aelfir masters, some tales tell of some individual aelfir aiding humanity, though whether out of a genuine sign that even the aelfir could find redemption or a simple desire to revenge some petty slight from their comrades is long forgotten.

While the aelfir were mighty, they were few. At first, hundreds of thousands of aelfir brought extremely powerful magics down upon humanity to slay millions. But humanity was as the mayflies, and their numbers were beyond count. Not only this, but the aelfir had never expected simple men and women to learn to wield magic as they did, for while humans still held no candle to the light of the aelfir's power, they still learnt the aelfir's methods and proved themselves deadly in their own way. Many an amazed and horrified aelfir Magi saw that while they were the match for any human, a hundred human Magi together could easily block and counter their spells with ones of their own, and soon the aelfir faltered.

While the war desolated entire continents and the two sides traded millions of lives in each skirmish, both sides proved equally capable of devastation, and only one proved able to sustain such losses and survive. While nearly all of humanity would die warring with their masters, slowly the second children of Aersanon dwindled and died away. While devastation wracked all of Aeras, so few aelfir survived that even finding them to hunt became a long and arduous process for specialists to perform.

The war had lasted an untellable amount of time. Years? Decades? Centuries or millennia? By the end, nearly all the world was in ruins, every major city depopulated or crumbled to the ground, entire oceans and land masses rearranged from magics. Cities had sunk to the sea, or raised above the world to keep them away from the battle. Almost all had died.

But humanity still had one last being to fear.

They did not know what Aersanon would do. How could they? Would their creator be furious and angered at the attack against Their creations? Would they agree with humanity, but decide they could not allow them to control themselves? Would Aersanon decide to restart the world anew and begin again, or would They simply return the aelfir to life and allow history to repeat? Perhaps They would even decide the aelfir had deserved their fate, or that humanity had proven themselves to be greater than They had ever hoped.

### A Forgotten Conversation

*Unknown proto-Aversarian guardsman to a comrade, before time*

Brother, do you not understand? I have seen Them, spoken to Them. I know you me mad, you find the ravings of which I give to you to be untrue or folly. I tell ye truthfully oh brother and comrade. I have seen Them, our creator of all and the

live on.

They were beautiful and terrible. They were seen by myself on twice an occasion told you this tale. First they came before a crying widow, standing before the gray fallen son and man, and laid a hand upon her shoulder and said to her thus as I see now:

"I cry and grieve and stand with you, my child and daughter. Please wipe away your tears of liquid, which you create from your form in ways I understand not. Your mouth is immaterial, a momentary lapse in a long life I have watched and known. Your love sits with me in my mind and love, and will one day return more or lesser. I cry with you for your life remains so short, and so much of its instant shall be consumed by tears I never wished shed."

But the second was horror I tell you! When I first saw them comfort the widow, I could not understand the queer sight. No mortal being of blood such as I and you ever understand the workings of Them, and my stomach turned rapid at Their first sight. My mind attempted to put Them into image. But the second was horrifying, oh, Misery and terror! A star passed the world, and this angered Them more than anything else I had witnessed in any tale!

Upon sighting something not to Their creation in the cosmos, the creator in Them and rage tore down many cities, and appeared in the sky as a malevolent and angry god upon which we tremored. After months of devastation, They came down and begged forgiveness, apologized for They claimed They knew not what They did. Do you understand? Divinity is not of man, we will never know Their power, and I shall dare risk bringing Their beauty upon myself.

But Aersanon was supreme, They had the power to end all human existence with nothing besides a thought. They could simply rewrite time and ensure humanity had never existed, or bring all back to the moment of the rebellion's beginning. Those few surviving humans were desperate, scared, horrified. There was great argument and discussion, possibly even civil war, but their decision became final. Some would say humanity stole the spell they cast from the aelfir, in other tales a rogue aelfir had gifted it. Maybe the ritual was even simply one of humanity's own creation. No matter its origin, they prepared its casting. Thousands of surviving Magi, using the blood and souls of untold millions and billions of fallen men and aelfir to power their spell, fired a ray of pure light into the heavens. Some say this tore through the sky itself and destroyed the stars there, resulting in a great void without light that humans could observe for eons after.

What the spell did is impossible to say. Had humanity discovered how to strike into the realm of the gods? Had they attacked Aersanon's mortal form and cut Them off from the world? Or perhaps their spell was far more esoteric, and had simply brought their reality into Aersanon's, introducing time, entropy and the inevitability of death to a universe that had yet to experience such things. Perhaps by doing so, they had brought forth the end of all existence, the slow death of all 'gods' and all forces and rules and time and existence itself, and Aersanon was simply the first to face the end They had never understood the inevitability of.

No matter what the spell did, no matter where it came from, Aersanon slowly looked back to the world and saw Their children at war. Before They could even blink, in Their moment of realizing what humanity had done, the spell struck.

They had killed Aersanon. Humanity had destroyed its own god.

Could they truly kill a god? Had they simply killed Their mortal reflection and cut off Their ability to interact with Aeras? Were they truly dead, or merely comatose? Could death and destruction ever apply no matter what laws they forced upon Aersanon? Who can say, but Aersanon would never speak to humanity again.

No matter how, they had destroyed their creator, and reality answered with a screech.

## History Begins

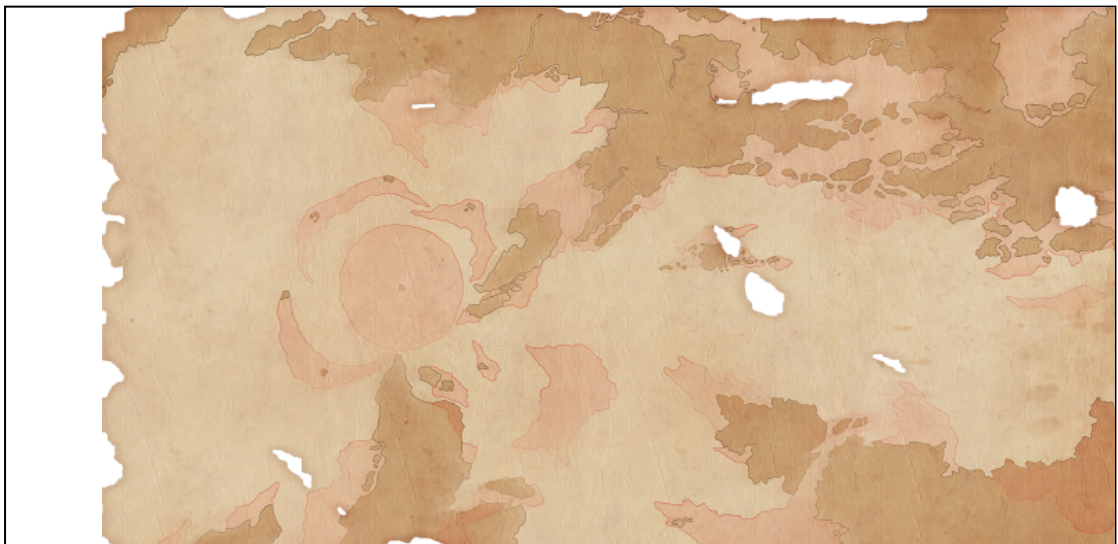
### Collapse and Rebirth

*The beginning of history to 1180 IS*

The reaction was immediate. It was apocalyptic. Most considered it the end of time. Almost all had died in the Godherja, nearly all remaining died alongside Aersanon. One in every ten humans who had already survived the Godherja would survive the immediate repercussions. Perhaps even less. In a moment they blinked out of existence, exploded into showers of fire, withered away and died. Magi fared even worse, for while they too faced this, the sudden and massive discharge of magical energies proved far too great for almost any of their bodies to handle. Those who survived discovered their power gone, for while humanity still possessed the blood of creation, Aersanon's death had destroyed or changed every single law that governed magic. Those few surviving spells became twisted and dark, just as dangerous to the successful caster as it was to the ones they cast them upon.

Entire continents shifted into the sea or rose from nothing, an entire hemisphere vanishing and separating from known reality. Magical wormholes and voids appeared and closed across the world. Colors changed, vanished, appeared. The very nature of how sound could travel, how gravity functioned, how life and death continued in its cycle and the fundamental laws and natures of existence were all reconstructed, changed, or vanished in moments. The entire world twisted and bent, cities and populations and countries and worlds appearing and vanishing and traveling across entire eons in an instant.

Magic too had become corrupted, the very power of creation twisting and bending from the aftershock of the other world's change by mortal hands. Lines of power burned out of Aersanon's tower and from the place in which Their mortal form had fallen, the ground bursting open where these lines met and burning magic into the world itself. Evil spirits created by the aelfir from magic and souls spread across the world, the shifting of reality spawned endless others. A thousand scattered ideas from Aersanon's mind became manifest, as if always having been. Strange new twisted creatures, beings and locations appearing across the world. The coasts shattered, Artaradex'ron sinking into the sea around the tower and the grand continent to its east breaking into thousands of separate islands and lands that would one day be Aversaria.





*A map of Aeras before and after (unknowingly) Godherja by Magi-Archeologist Magister Nyctinaius, pieced together from ancient murals*

Perhaps worst of all, this apocalypse destroyed the very cycle of life and death. Souls still returned to Aersanon, but they did not find peace there. Instead of quietly assuring them in their afterlife the creator lay silent, and these lost spirits no longer returned to Aeras, instead trapped in the increasingly hellish realm of a 'dead' god's mind. Sometimes they would fade in and out of the material and the ethereal, their existence in the cosmos reflected in reality just as the gods. Some wandered Aeras forever, others became trapped through strange rituals and horrible happenstance, some proved so powerful and so angered in their death that they refused not to haunt the world after.

When the chaos finally ended, reality slowly settled into its dust and shattered remnants and decided on the new rules of existence. Humanity took a shuddering breath. Barely, just barely, enough of man survived to continue onward. Humanity had once formed great empires, clothed themselves in bronze and iron, and the aelfir had then conquered them and built flying machines, twisted great beings into living vehicles for their use, and had developed magic so powerful as to allow them to manipulate and twist lost souls. Then it was all gone, all the inventions and developments of man and aelfir, all of Aersanon's carefully prepared and created facets of the world. Not only was humanity reduced to hunter-gatherers using stone tools and struggling to survive a thousand years of winter and famine, reality itself was now chaos. While once Aersanon had carefully guided and controlled reality with goal and purpose, now reality had no controller, it was an infinite mess of random forces and powers and entropy now guiding the world.

A new era of dust, scattered remnants of humanity in numbers perhaps as low as thousands. Nearly all creatures of the world had died or were entirely new to this horrifying world. Apocalypse had even broken the seasons as badly as the dead and burnt lands of the world. Thousand year long rainstorms or winters, the seas seemingly now ignoring all laws and randomly raising and lowering at their leisure. Even Aervalr was now a sickening green, a part of Aersanon's mind manifest in the sky, now twisted and dark. The beating heart of the world and the rushing veins under its crust pulsed, skipped their beat, and struggled onward still, the blood

### **Treatise of Good Practice, Page 43**

*Part of the Seventh Century Concordial Pact, written and added by many Aversarian Magi since*

Within the Mayikprolollan, many arts of magic are to be and learned. More than anything, however, students must understand the use of the ritual.

While some spells can be cast without, or by rituals as in a spoken word or a flick of the hands, most magic require preparation. Circles need to be drawn of certain material symbols memorized and placed at perfect times and positions and numerous steps taken to fulfill their course. While many ancient tales tell of a time in which the First Men needed nothing besides their hands to cast the greatest of spells, not in such a wondrous era.

As such, all students of the Mayikprolollan must remember the necessity to memorize the rituals to be performed. We know from the Kashiryans that to experiment would be folly. The eastern scholars have attempted to create their own ritual piece together ancient ones without full knowledge, and time and time again nearly destroyed their realm both du

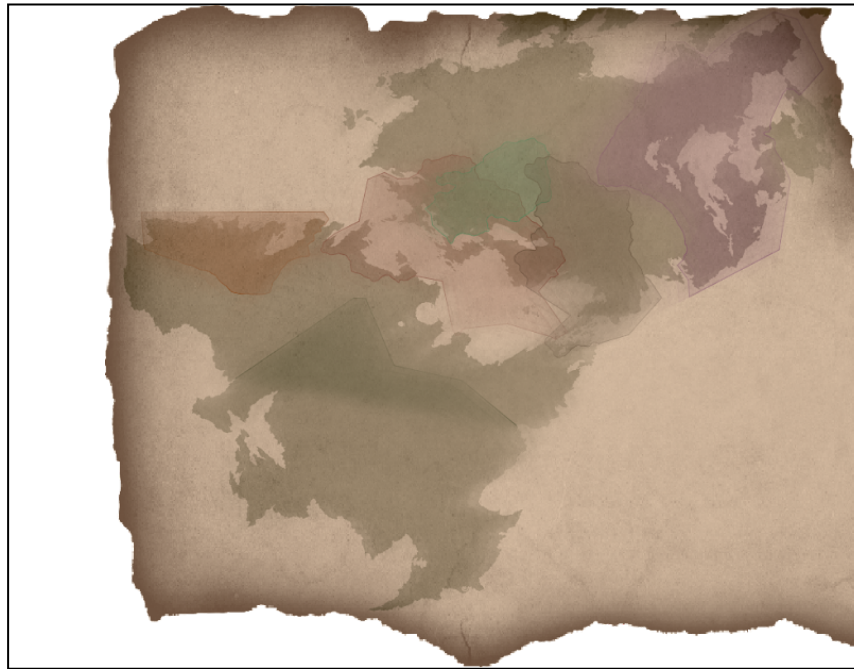
their lack of humanity and failure to understand the power of magic. Not only must students strive to prevent such failures, they should remember that great spells require many Magi to lend power and assist in their containment, and should remember the cascading failure that can come when a single Magi is overwhelmed and the spell falls to their comrades.

As long as we Aversarians remember such necessities, we thankfully never experience the horrors many others have accidentally unleashed upon their realms with irresponsible magics.

running through Aeras tainted with rot.

But humanity was a species built on survival. Its existence had always been tenuous, its greatest and strongest feature always its determination. Humanity struggled and forced itself forward, building tools of flint and obsidian or tearing them from the skeletal hands of what their ancient ancestors had called aelfir. A thousand generations struggled forward, time moving forward and back, passing endlessly as humanity persevered through the final shock waves of their creator's death.

When it all finally settled, when Aeras found a new 'normal' and slowly entered mundanity and reason, humanity was alive. So long had passed, so many died, so many humans split to new tribes or merged with others, that man had forgotten Aersanon. As did they forget the aelfir, and so too the Godherja, and all human history before the great collapse. All that survived would be the scattered remnants of memory, ancient bastardized folklore told from the mouths of ancient tale-tellers to their tribes for centuries and centuries. By the time the first human cities formed, and humanity returned to agriculture and settlement, or relearned magic in this strange new world, they had already formed thousands of new faiths and cultures. They looked upon the ancient ruins of the old or built atop them and did not know where they had come from. Ancient aelfir cities became the homes of mysterious gods, dark ritual sites in mountains became the heavens for those living in their shadow, and some claimed it was ancient humanity who had built these great towers and monuments.



*A map of Aeras and the known extent of several of its historical empires by Aversarian Magi and cartographer Ollos of Myrn in 1193 IS. Ollos created the map through a mix of cross-referencing other maps, reading histories, and scrying magics. He would be blinded and exiled by Aautokratia Axiaothea for his dynasty's Aeschraeist sympathies and his life's work, his maps, destroyed at her order in the following purge. The map has since become largely forgotten.*

The wheel of history shuddered and groaned as its rusted cogs turned for the first time in eons. Slowly, man

rediscovered civilization with all its virtues and evils, and in every region of the world, humans slowly rediscovered power.

In the far eastern lands of what would be Kathun-Kai, great settlements slowly grew across rivers and in the nestled shade of valleys. They spread along the coast in untold millions and formed great theocratic states that raised armies in the millions.

In the Great Steppe that stretched out west from Kathun, humanity rediscovered the horse, and began riding in great tribes and clans that feuded with one another or rode in hordes to take the wealth of civilization from the weak who settled down. They masked themselves and claimed only gods could see their features, and dreamed of riches waiting to be taken.

South of them, a faith of a million gods grew and spread and developed forward. Eminent scholars and theologians and priests sat atop a hundred castes. Their faith grew and collapsed and recovered and splintered into millions of cults and faiths, each with their own desires and obsessions, and a dream of the perfection of knowledge bringing them to unearth those things best left forgotten in modern times.

Magocracies would form in some of the world, leaders and rulers building empires and kingdoms to battle one another for the discovery of true magical power, cruel human lords proving a match of the long-forgotten aelfir in ambition and callousness. They slaughtered those they considered impure, dreaming to perfect a bloodline that could hold magic in perfection, and they dabbled with dark forces in a desire to live undying forever after.

### **Letter from a Northern Spy**

*Unknown Adabyssian spy to an unknown official, 754 IS*

Listener,

The people of the north remain primitive. They hold magic as intelligence, believing it to be a necessary part of life and central to all. Technological progress remains pathetic, a way of life primitive, and standard of living disgusting. Children die in birth, and they still see a wheel as the peak of progress while our people enjoy flight among decks of steel. The only culture of note lies far to the north in 'Shevalee', who apparently have discovered ancient blueprints of ours for rudimentary grenades.

They still seem little better than apes, but they are apes who have learnt how to make smoke and flashes to fight equal pathetic northern Liches, nothing compared to the great our glory continually strives against.

Humbly, I once more submit to you a Form of Legislative Transfer, begging for you to allow me station anywhere in this world. The north is pathetic, its peoples useless, and chances of them ever uplifting themselves from miserable primitivity as likely as the City of Golden Statues finding a match here. Their discovery of fire appears to have been a hilarious twist of fate and an undue anomaly, and was likely simply yet another art they stole from us in an attempt to create an actual civilization. I understand they are too useless to conquer, but please suggest to the General Corps the impeding purging of this entire continent or allow me to go somewhere where a doctor knows the benefits of washing their hands.

Among ancient deserts, a thousand faiths grew and died. Many grew to worship the monuments of old,

building great landmarks to represent their cruel gods and the moon above them. They enslaved all they faced and dreamed of domination. Others achieved these dreams, reaching immortality, but not as men. Ideas would spread and entrench, and around Aersanon's towers would grow a faith that would one day be the oldest in the world. To their south, the people of the jungle grew and fought and battled, and studied the waves of magic and the ruins of the old, and would one day steal the lost technology of the aelfir and twist it to their use, building upon it and surpassing even their once masters' technology and power.

But most important, perhaps, or at least those that would have the greatest effect on history thereafter, were the Aversarians.

They did not call themselves Aversarian, for this was a later term coined long after they had left their first marks. They were once the followers of a great aelfir ruler, who had controlled Artaradex'ron in Aersanon's name and ruled humanity with brutality. The Aversarians had once been their guardsmen, brought up to protect their master for the untrustworthiness of their fellow aelfir. Despite their service to the aelfir, many others had joined the rebels or abandoned the war entirely.

Against the odds, enough survived to continue thereafter. Endless time passed, and they had long forgotten their bonds of service, but many still spoke of their ancient emperor. A thousand generations after the death of the aelfir, the Aversarians named their former master Aersodiox and considered them the speaker of the gods. They grew and spread, their culture collapsed and diversified, and they formed dozens of great cities through what was once Artaradex'ron and what would one day be the 'Imperial Isle' and 'Etepezea', the core of their future Empire.

The ancient Aversarians built great cities and cultures. Most important of all became the Aersodioxians, whose cruel religion would dominate many cities and whose rulers believed in the ritual necessity of slavery. Despite this, however, those who called Aversarians kin had formed hundreds of faiths and cultures, or practiced the beliefs of Aersodioxianism in their own ways. Many Aversarian polis, as they called their mighty city-states, became famous for great culture or fascination with the sciences and arts. In theatres they would endlessly debate philosophy and the nature of the world, or of faith and belief. Polis would experience and develop diverse governments, democracies, republics, empires and magocracies. They would fight and war, or join with one another and create monumental works to be cherished for time immemorial.

They built their cities upon the ancient ruins of the aelfir, seeing the remains as the remnants of humankind's empire under Aersodiox. They would become powerful, a culture that would bring forth great reformers and great conquerors, leaders and warlords.

As time went on, however, the city-states proved unable to survive. Great collapse would come, and the era of these city-states would slowly fade. In their place came the Magi-kings. Great and powerful warlords who would conquer their rival cities and lay great destruction upon one another. As time passed, so too did the hundred independent city-states, the Aersodioxians increasingly becoming dominated by warlords who used their power to hold themselves up as Nikariyn, an ancient title descending from the captain of the aelfir guards.

One above them all would eventually conquer all the city-states of Aversaria. They would form an empire to last a thousand years and one day they would name it the Aversarian Aautokrata, the 'Human Imperium'. They would grow and conquer their region, the now more commonly called Aversarians would merge the many polis cultures into one and conquer the coasts and the inlands. They would fight a great civil war upon their thousand dragons, and by its end, the Aersodioxians and dragons both had perished. In their place stood a new faith, the Aversarinas Aagiokrata, 'Humanity's Faith'. The belief in humanity's superiority and descent from a godly figure named the Purest and their followers, the First Men. It was an artificial faith, meant for the Aautokratirs, the

Emperors of Aversaria, to establish themselves as gods, and this faith held Aversarians as humans and all others as deserving of slavery or death.

They would dominate the Continent, growing an Empire based around the celebration of their citizenry and magic. Magi would rule and fight in great duels called Blood Senates after the death of the Aautokrator to decide who should rule thereafter. Civil wars were frequent and bloody, such as Maklea's Purges and the Widow War, but always the Magi would emerge victorious, and always the Empire would grow. They would develop their abilities in magic, grow the power within their blood through eugenics and endless rituals, and would become possibly the strongest Magi the world had known since the Godherja.

As they fought and grew and dominated, other cultures too developed. In the north, slaves from a great Empire in what they would call the Black Mountains would rise and march west, escaping their masters and invading the lands of the Gallicaders. Ancient engines turned beneath what would be Chevalie, forming an ancient and mysterious anti-magic shield in which magic grew progressively weaker as one entered, having held the land long before anyone could remember. There they destroyed or assimilated with the Gallicaders, and would become the Marchers of Chevalie.

They were so named for their position against the north. There the Ojyczaynz, in their hundred kingdoms and magocracies, had discovered the art of Lichdom. To trap one's soul within their dead body for eternity, giving them access to endless magics in return for their life and the horrible steps to perform the ritual. They were excessively vain, cruel, and prideful, much as the aelfir had once been, and after the Sorrowing of Oejeynica had ended with the entire northern realm being sucked of all life and power, they began great invasions of the south. First by Arch-Lich Vilas Venslau, but later by others such as Silas Stavro, Milon 'the Godtouched' Zackowic, Wethynod Wethydoltek, and hundreds of others. Liches would prove a constant threat to the realms of man, and endlessly invade into Chevalie, only stopped by their own constant infighting and the bravery and skill of the Marcher Anti-Magi, who had long developed a martial art around battle with Magi and beasts by the mundane of

### **Of Liches and Evil, Poem 3**

*Abaël Venodau in his third poem on the matter of Liches, a highly controversial for alleged sympathy to the necromance*

*Liches, dark and vile minds with a black soul,  
While every lip has worked to ask for cause  
For why they wish to flaunt all of man's laws,  
And why darkness consumes each Lich whole*

*Vile ritual work, taking its foul toll?  
Minds devoured by ambition without pause?  
Does life unending lead to darkened halls?  
Power infinite take away control?*

*And what, I ask the reader, should be done?  
If the Lich is a victim of craving?  
For do we not all journey down the Path?  
Just remember, as to glory you run,  
And you listen to my worried raving,  
To recall ambition's foul aftermath.*

the world.

To the far south, the Ritualists would come to dominate the southern continent of Sarradon. Their strange and schismatic faith would worship one of Aersanon's great ancient towers, built over with great sandstone bricks to form spiraling stairs they claimed pilgrims had once climbed and faced a trial upon each of its thousand-and-one steps. Sophocoists would be their own name for their faith, named for the Great Tower of Sophocos that they worshipped. Their schismatic faith would constantly end in thousands of competing cults and sects and offshoots

as Ritualist scholars and theologians fought both with words and swords about the most mundane facets of their faith.

While they battled the great empire of the Kemsari to the west, who had built great cities and monuments to worship their gods and who had enslaved thousands to fuel their grand constructions, they would collapse into a holy war from within. The Wardenites would rise, a new faith claiming that god was real, and he was an evil and malignant force that humanity had to contain or die trying. Despite some believing that they were simply yet another schism from Ritualism, they would rise against the Ritualists in a great wave, beginning the War in Heaven that would consume Sarradon for a thousand years. Despite this, Sarradon remained one of the richest and most vibrant lands of humanity, giving great culture and progress, even as they burned in brutal faith conflict.

### **Ketrynos's Letter No. 203**

*Magi-Archeologist Ketrynos, to Aautokrator Biton 1119 IS*

Glorious Aautokrator Biton, whom created humanity in your life, and so too leads and grants culture and glory to all of hum who now thanks you for their creation,

Are you mad? A fool? What in the world do you think you do of when you write me so? You placed me here, in this godless land and tribals, to learn of their magic. Yet you doubt me so! letter is more nonsense, more insults, more complaints! You sit Oraispol or write from Asiupoli, while I am forced to sit here filth and dig through ancient bones!

I am your cousin, and I tell you now that this is below me. I have already told you all I could learn, and there is nothing more to tell you no matter your doubts. Yes, the Sarradonians practice as I do, that of the schools of the Living and the Dead, and the mysterious Mixed from both or neither. Yes, this is the same as Yes, they have seemingly done so since before the formation of mankind's glorious Aautokrata.

But past this? How the *hell* do you think I should know? The some evidence of an ancient conqueror, who perhaps brought genius from the homeland to these fools. Who knows? Who can You know as well as I do that the schools of magic we teach are when you consider their true art, that we simply shove powers shall never understand into frameworks that can hardly describe them. You want answers for why we and the Sarradonians both uniquely fail to comprehend what we do? Then find them your damn self!

Yours truly with honor always, and eternally at the service of your glory,

Magi-Archeologist Ketrynos

So too would the Kemsari fall, overwhelmed in a great slave rebellion in the north. The Amsari would use the Kemsari's magic against them, redirecting their powers to dry and shift the great river that flowed through the Kemsari heartland. It would collapse in drought overnight, the Amsari rising to create their own great empire based around their new river. There they would worship a Prophet, who saw all of history ending at the end of the next thousand years, amid a great conflict in a distant empire that worshipped humanity and exalted the Magi.

And then to the far east, in the lands of the growing Empire of Kathun-Kai and the scholar-dominated Kashirya, came the Öltenic. Following the wielder of an ancient and terrible sword, they conquered Kashirya and formed a great empire. A generation later they would spread and collapse, but colonize in this downfall the steppes of what Aversarians would name Aironoi.

The Aversarian Aautokrata continued to spread, growing in power and might. They would battle with the Anti-Magi of Chevalie for control of the northern woodlands of Kalathipsomi and conquer them throughout

these wars. They would overthrow the Mountain-Sun Temple and form the Governorate of Opakhasia, they would enslave and destroy the Iyrossi and declare their homeland of Mytidon to be Malcois, and they would go east and conquer the lands of Aironoi, where they would declare the Öltenic long lost cousins and allow them to rule in their name.

There were crises unending, but also survival and rebirth. The spread of the Bloodblight, the rise of the Lich Count Themós, and the invasion by the Kartharaddi Imperium would mark the greatest crisis yet with the Chaos of the Seventh Century. Chevalie burned alongside them, their mad king slaughtering a generation of nobility and Arch-Lich Silas Stavro invading in the following chaos, as even their faith, the Lifepath, splintered and collapsed. In Sarradon, endless cycles of warlords would continue to escalate the War in Heaven, peace becoming rarer and rarer as the war's thousand conflicts would spark and renew. Despite this, Aversaria would recover and grow, conquering the Kartharaddi who would, in a mysterious single night, perish in a magical catastrophe rarely matched in scale before or since, brought forth by means and actors unknown. This land would soon become the last major Aversarian governorate, Katraddia. One day they would name it the Foglands.

### **Machyos's Journal, Entry 804**

*Magi Machyos Protbex during the Kartharaddi Wars, 76.*

I have my own issues with the homeland, of course, who doesn't? I've traveled too far to delude myself about or superiority, that we hold up so often and beat upon the everyone else endlessly through brutal warfare or miserable philosophical debate. But this land? The Kartharaddi Imp

The Unspoken is a mighty figure, a silent goliath who leads troops to destroy Aversarian legions with ease. I respect his men, but I struggle to comprehend their place in society. Slave soldiers? Not only that, but a slave empire? From what I've learnt, every man, every woman, every child in the nation live under endless slavery. Even in Aversaria citizens enjoy rights, but a realm without even that?

To my disbelief, they even say they take each of their blood. Their Emperor, always a former slave themselves, holds phylacteries with the life-force of each of their subjects. It means instant death through intense magic. How does society function? How do soldiers knowing nothing besides slavery fight with such vigor? How the *fuck* am I going to get out of this one? Everywhere I've gone I've found some way to escape what I imagined would have been my inevitable death. But here in Malcois? A duel with the Unspoken himself? Ah, this one's going to be miserable, can already tell that.

I need a drink.

Aversaria would grow and collapse and grow again, their magic becoming stronger and each civil conflict becoming far more destructive. Even when the Empire did not face a great crisis, the Governorates would war, each Governor and their nobles feuding endlessly in a desire for greater power and control for their region. Many had grown sick and tired of the conflict and the endless death, of the dominance of the Magi and the brutal excesses of slavery. These people would rise in what would become the Agionist Rebellions, eight Saints who each represented different virtues and reforms forming great Order Militants to do battle with the Imperials. While the Autokratir attempted to find a balance between his conservative nobles and these reformers, it would tear Aversaria asunder.

Katharitos the philosopher would preach the necessity of reaching perfection through hard work and kindness. Eos the knight would call for bravery and protecting the weak. The brilliant and beautiful Legan Sansia called for self-sacrifice. Pirate captain Calysto desired an end to all slavery and freedom for all. The healer Thysia strived to advance medicine and give its miracles to all, regardless of class or birth. The Preacher Philantros upheld the value of charity and generosity. Dikaynos, the greatest lawman in Aversaria's history, demanded justice and equality for all. And the mysterious Forgotten Saint preached humility and an end to the Aautokrator's claims for reincarnation. While each refused the title of Saint or the worship of their followers, their followers would slide into zealotry and extremism. Eventually, rebels would murder the children of Phancis, and the Imperials would crush the Agionists in the overwhelming response that followed.

### **Observance No. 34**

*Unknown spy to Aautokrator Phancis, 1089 IS*

Master and ruler,

This one is unsure what to note first. There are thousand faithful zealots and mercenary hire-ons both. There are g rebels here, ones that are possibly more dangerous than t 'Saints' themselves. Pascos the Heathen, Legon Ultirnos, Whisperer themself. This one has attached agents to folk each, though the Whisperer has already turned three insi

Never to this one's knowledge have each of these Saints b met at once, though this one has kept their forces hidden have requested, despite opportunity to end this here. Od most seem to reject violence. Arch-Legan Sansia and the 'knight', Eos, both seem to be the militants. The rest seer a mix of 'reformer' and preacher. Katharitos in particular nothing besides an old goat, and the Nameless one is eith greatest Magi to ever live or some form of mad charlatan.

This one should also note that your son has sent Magiste Ulriticon here as his representative. This one imagines yo wish to know that he has begun to directly participate in party of these 'Agionists'.

So far the Saintsmeet seems peaceful, but this one warns many speak of greater war, and the numbers of the Orde Militant seem to grow...

Reform came, but never enough, and Aversaria's brutal reign continued. Nobles sacrificed thousands for rituals unending, always trying to find the most power spell with which to destroy their enemies. Thousands of slaves lived and died within mines, and Aversaria slowly syncretized every culture and religion it dominated and twisted and bastardized them until the conquered were indistinguishable from their own peoples, or would wipe them out in great cleanses. They manipulated even the Agionists into conformity and brought them too into orthodoxy, though it would be greed and not the Aversarians that would truly destroy their virtue.

In Sarradon, warring Magi discovered an ancient spell. Self-Replicating Blood Magic. A terrible ritual once crafted by the aelfir, which even their power could hardly control, that used the fuel of human blood to spread and grow. Each human struck by the spell would explode into a great pyre, and all around them would likewise, and so it would spread like a virus. Competing Ritualist and Wardenite Magi would attempt to use the spell and lose control of it, Sarradon soon facing nearly complete desolation as hundreds of thousands more beyond their

## Illuminated, Page 46

*Likely written by the Anti-Magi Ordermaster Sir Quile Calm  
1101 IS*

All ask after mystic weapons, so entranced are they by the  
of great blades such as Eyon Faeng, Crowfang, the Blade  
and more. Yet what they forget is that while Sir Landett c  
Sun Piercer, and the Magi Saraxos wielded the Lepídaspa  
the number of men and women who have wielded great  
weapons of power have been greatly outnumbered by the  
who have become experts in their craft with simple weap  
iron and steel.

We do not have the ability to create these arms, or at least  
know of none who do. While legends always claim that  
someone can, they always seem to be beyond another hor  
First they claimed that magical blades could be found in  
Aversaria, then when we came to Aversaria they said in  
Sarradon, then once we entered Sarradon they said Kashi  
and then Kathun-Kai, and now even the lands beyond.

These alien weapons are powerful, of metal and power b  
unknown to us, some are even said to speak or have mind  
their own. Their effects are many, some cutting reality its  
some igniting, others shooting lightning or turning foes t  
These are fantastical weapons, that you will never touch  
Keep reading this codex, and learn properly the art of swi  
in a world where we must kill with what we have.

borders died as collateral damage.

Aversaria in its great and increasingly struggling empire saw this, as did the Chevaliens who had long created a culture of mercenary and trade work. The Aversarians removed the Agionists from their realm by sending them as colonists to Sarradon. First as traders and preachers, but later as conquerors who carved great swathes out of the southern realms. There, greed would devour the Agionists, turning them into mockeries of their Saint's virtues while an insidious force in the east would twist their minds towards madness with only the Eosians avoiding this fate. So too would the Marchers come, fueled by greed and a desire for glory, playing all against one another as they sell their swords and goods and using this position to carve out their own crusading realms and merchant cities among the ruins of the Ritualist order and the three great Wardenite Mamurats.

More than riches, Aversaria dreamed of the ancient tombs and laboratories sitting undisturbed beneath the dunes. Not long before their arrival, the tribes of the desert had risen in a great invasion of the living while carrying a legendary sword of power and using long forgotten magic to give the desert life and ride among the sand like waves of the sea. The Aversarians knew that this great horde, even defeated, had discovered it in the endless forgotten fortresses they dwelled above. Profit may have inspired their colonization, but the Magi of Aversaria were entirely consumed by their dreams of ancient Sarradonian power.





*A map of the Aversarian Aautokrata at its greatest extent (roughly 1162 IS) likely created in 1186 IS by the Aversarian Cartographer's Union as a wedding gift for Aautokratir Anesimasios and Axiaothea.*

Even as it grew, the Aautokrata was edging on collapse. Civil conflict became more common, the destruction of entire cities with it as Magi grew increasingly more powerful with each successive bloodline. Imperial Law had long become an endless and impossible to untangle mess, and the Imperial economy verged on collapse nearly every year. Spinning into endless disaster, Aversaria struggled forward, especially as its overstretched borders required increasingly massive numbers of their legions to hold it. Skirmishes with the Sjalvolki tribes of the far northeast became common, as did their defense against raids from a thousand other tribes and cultures within and without Aversaria. Petty warlords would rise and declare themselves Aautokratir with regularity, civil war was becoming the norm, famine and disease spread more and more commonly and with more slaves than citizens, uprisings were constant. Aversaria seemed doomed when it somehow got worse.

Odrstund.

Gederđa had not been uncommon, coming and going with mysterious effects. Whenever Aersanon stirred in Their infinite rest, dreamed dark dreams in death, or gave a long and rattling breath, the world would shake and change. Sometimes it was small, a city vanishing in an instant, Magi within a region burning in fire or men flinching at the moon and howling as they turned to beasts. Other times they were massive, entire continents shaking from the force, thousands across a region dying, a river turning to blood and clouds turning to locusts. Reality would shift and warp each time, for one or for millions.

Odrstund was perhaps the worst to befall Aversaria in its history. A great shockwave that twisted the minds of the Aversarian nobility, its focus seemingly limited to those holding great magics. It did not force them to evil, nor did it affect anyone born a moment after it struck, but every Aversarian noble who held any amount of magical ability had their worst traits twisted and increased. The cruel became sadistic, the ambitious became envious, and the cynical became sociopathic. Within a night, Aversarian politics went from the world's most cut-throat to an endless cycle of murder and war. They now met every petty grudge with blood, every long-standing rivalry with all-out war. The Empire tumbled and burned.

One Aversarian born during the Odrstund, perhaps the last to face its effects or doomed for the culture they were now born into, was Aeschraes.

The son of powerful Etepezean nobility, his family remained one of the oldest, strongest, and most entrenched in Aversaria. When Aeschraes was young, his father would beat and abuse his children, most of all Aeschraes's sickly sister, who Aeschraes considered his only confidant. After his father murdered her in a drunken rage, Aeschraes in his fury destroyed his childhood estates and his father, wiping out an entire palace-city from pure magical rage.

In a moment, Aeschraes had gone from a hardly notable fourth son in a major noble family to the strongest Magi in a generation. All Aversarians took note of young Aeschraes who caused so much damage in a fit of rage. All wondered what good or evil he would one day do with such power.

One day, he would bring forth the end of the world.

## The Civil War and Frodbrokna

*1180 IS to 1200 IS*

The world's end would come in 1200 IS, but its descent is impossible to track.

Perhaps Aversaria's creation was the beginning of the end, or perhaps it was its fall, or the Odrstund, or the birth of Aeschraes during it. Maybe it was none of these things, but it would matter little, for by now it was far too late to stop.

Before he would end the world, and after slaying his father, Aeschraes escaped north to the Mayikprolollan, the academy of Magi that trained Aversaria's most prestigious practitioners ever since the Chaos of the Seventh Century showed Magi needed some manner of control and training. There were technically thousands of small Mayikprolollans across Aversaria, but the greatest and most prestigious three sat within Kalathipsomi. Most notable of all was the main academy above all others, which sat upon the ancient northern mountains and had settled within ruins so massive and old to defy logic. Its classrooms were patios cropped out of the peaks of mountains, its halls running deep below the lowest depths of Aeras. It was so large and labyrinthine that students and slave both would regularly vanish within the archives, and complain of strange and beastly whispering that drifted up and through the closed-off tunnels.

The Mayikprolollan had long used its powers to twist the realms of rulers outside of their halls. Being given the full ability to educate and teach the students who arrive and practically raising them under the tutelage of their Magisters, the Mayikprolollan had long taken to influencing the politics of the Aautokrata and other realms abroad. When Aeschraes arrived into their halls, they quickly set to their indoctrination, working to turn Aeschraes into a puppet with which they could control his family.

Likewise, they attempted to do so with another new student, Axiaothea, the second daughter of Metricon, Governor of Aironoi. Axiaothea spent most of her life secluded away by her father, who feared his political rivals assassinating his daughter and a necessary part of his political plans. Axiaothea's constant attempts to free herself led to him marrying her off early to Kothexir Lathaxos Sitharask, one of his most powerful vassals, known for his deviant proclivities and the untimely death of seven previous young wives. While her father may have been nervous about such a reputation, the impressive bride price and Lathaxos's promise to support Metricon's second son, Kutharos, in his bid in the next Blood Senate with his political backing, training, and the gift of several artifacts he believed would assist him.

After an impressive wedding in which attendants noted Axiaothea to be simultaneously distraught and enraged during the entire procession, Lathaxos had her detained and dragged off to her bridal room after nearly killing several guests in a sudden outburst of magic, the first sign she had shown of magical ability despite many tests finding none before. While this rapidly raised the worth of her hand, Governor Metricon had already signed the pact and ordered their family to leave her despite the protests from her brother and sister, Kutharos and Methenia.

What happened next isn't clear, though the conclusions are obvious. Axiaothea was sequestered within a tower in Lathaxos's keep for a month, during which servants claimed none could visit her, and Lathaxos only brought her paltry rations able to do little more than sustain her, then spending several hours within every night. Servants claimed to have attempted to sneak some items to the young Axiaothea, not even of teenage years yet, which she apparently used to make her escape.

While it is said the servants had brought her simple tools to pick her lock and climb down the tower, she had somehow instead used them to form a ritual circle of her own blood. Tales differ on whether Axiaothea had memorized an older ritual or if she had somehow invented or guessed one for herself, but the next time Lathaxos opened her door, Axiaothea immediately struck him with a massive blast so impressive it tore the walls from the tower and caused the upper floors to crumble to the keep below.

Laxathos's men watched from the ground as she held him suspended within the circle atop the ruined tower, where she magically tore the Magi's skeleton from his body. This was especially surprising, as Laxathos was a seasoned Battle-Magi nearly eighty years in age who most regarded as one of the most impressive of this age, and who had used impressive magics and artifacts to extend his life and vitality.

Axiaothea cut a bloody swath through his estate, slaughtering anyone standing in her way, whether they were attempting to stop her or simply fleeing. She stole a horse and made her way west, nothing left behind her besides the ruins of Laxathos's estate. Most of his family and retainers killed as Axiaothea had torn through the building and dragged entire floors down to the ground. Word traveled rapidly, Axiaothea not only having slaughtered one of Aironoi's most powerful rulers and Magi, but also a dozen of his close lieutenants, who each had a hundred stories told about their prowess before the event.

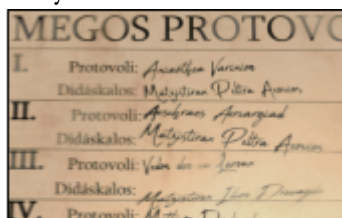
While her family attempted to track her down, as did hunters hired by Laxathos's surviving family, Axiaothea escaped to the Mayikprolollan, who decided that her political worth and now-apparent magical aptitude made it worth the political scandal to hold her from those who hunted her. In the academy, the Magi declared her their ward and eagerly awaited the opportunity to tie her to their puppet strings and one day rule Aironoi, and possibly even all of Aversaria, with their 'student'.

Axiaothea's importance to the greater fate of Aeras began the moment the Mayikprolollan began her initiation and placed her under the tutelage of Magister Peltra, alongside Aeschraes. The two were in a class of ten, Peltra creating her own curriculum in Mayikprolollan tradition both designed to give her students the greatest chance to reach their potential and also to ensure their indoctrination for the Mayikprolollan's use.

What Aeschraes and Axiaothea became under Peltra's tutelage is... unclear. Peltra abused her students when angered or feeling like they were not reaching proper ambition, acted as their only genuine friend and positive parental influence when they pleased her, and had a reputation in the Mayikprolollan as its most demanding instructor. The council had agreed that if anyone could draw out their power and break their rebellious streaks, it would be Peltra. Under such direction, both chaffed. Aeschraes and Axiaothea are said to have often been close, the only two who understood the other. Many litterateurs have romanticized this as a blooming adolescent love, though this seems confined only to tall-tales and romance literature. Contemporaries noted their closeness no matter what form it came in, but so too did they note their rivalry.

Axiaothea and Aeschraes both proved to be the most powerful students the Mayikprolollan had ever seen. Peltra saw this, and decided the best course would be to push them towards rivalry, especially as she saw their friendship as a weakness that needed to be ironed out were they to become truly perfect Magi free of petty worldly constraints like companionship or independent political interest.

The Mayikprolollan kept its most politically important students as far as possible from the pair, fearing political scandal if they sacrificed them for the benefit of the two's education. The Mayikprolollan had realized that they could control the two most powerful Governorates, Etepezea and Aironoi, through Aeschraes and Axiaothea. Not only that, but the two had greater magical potential than any preceding them. Thus, the Mayikprolollan's council in secret agreed with Peltra that their perfection was worth the sacrificing of a hundred lesser students if need be. They would have an education like none before, and it would make them mighty.



| MEGOS PROTOVO |                                                                                   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I.            | Protovoli: <i>Axiaothea Varcos</i><br>Didaskalos: <i>Magister Peltra Aironoi</i>  |
| II.           | Protovoli: <i>Aeschraes Aironoi</i><br>Didaskalos: <i>Magister Peltra Aironoi</i> |
| III.          | Protovoli: <i>Vain de la Loran</i><br>Didaskalos: <i>Magister Peltra Aironoi</i>  |
| IV.           | Protovoli: <i>Mitron Dendal</i>                                                   |

|       |                                 |                                            |
|-------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| V.    | Protovoli: <i>Thos Adalos</i>   | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Mada Jilala</i>   |
| VI.   | Protovoli: <i>Yos Dada</i>      | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Peltra Alos</i>   |
| VII.  | Protovoli: <i>Yos Dada</i>      | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Gora Mada</i>     |
| VIII. | Protovoli: <i>Xos Tora</i>      | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Jila Nunglora</i> |
| IX.   | Protovoli: <i>Ra Jaga</i>       | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Mada Jilala</i>   |
|       | Protovoli: <i>Nosa to Taita</i> | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Jila Mada</i>     |
|       | Protovoli: <i>Yos Dada</i>      | Didaskalos: <i>Matystira Jila Mada</i>     |

*A surviving copy of the Mayikpro competency rankings from 118*

Despite their friendship, nearly every day of their years in the Mayikprolollan became an endless competition between the two and other students. Together they'd end up killing over two dozen other acolytes or instructors during these competitions, far too powerful for their duels to be safe, and the Mayikprolollan delighted in seeing them rising so far. At one point it is even said that Peltra ordered both to drain the blood from one another with magic in a competition to see who would fall last. Both refused, and Peltra ordered their eight fellow students and ten members of the Diakóthogrifax (the academy's guard force of Magi trained to strike down other Magi and police the academy) to strike them until they did so.

To everyone's surprise, the two joined forces, and an entire wing of the ancient Mayikprolollan collapsed in the crossfire. The building built so well by techniques long forgotten that they had been the only ones able to cause such destruction. Only Peltra and two of her other students survived and escaped, and Aeschraes and Axiaothea turned forty-seven rooms and halls of the Mayikprolollan to rubble, and the council forever cordoned off twice that many from either latent magics or from the dangers of further collapse. In the destruction were the remains of over a hundred members of the Diakóthogrifax, various Magi instructors, and other students. Despite the great destruction, the Mayikprolollan's council celebrated. They had drawn out true power here. They only needed to refine and control it.

Aeschraes and Axiaothea both were finally subdued after exhausting the magic in their bodies and confined. While the Mayikprolollan has forever claimed it does not 'torture' students, they attempted endlessly to force them both into submission and to turn one against the other. The instructors fed and cleaned them only after they did whatever demeaning demand or petty trick Peltra demanded, or when they betrayed the other in some form.

After years, the Mayikprolollan had succeeded in half of their goals. Axiaothea and Aeschraes were finally willing to betray and attack the other, but they were not to be controlled. Both pretended to be the model student, doing exactly as bidden by their instructors, and both furthered to study and perfect the art of magic. The Mayikprolollan's instructors kept a public list announcing the rankings for the greatest and the worst of students and continuously threatened the worst students with expulsion. It had become known that Aeschraes and Axiaothea would always be at the top, constantly trading places with one another, only the one in first getting any form of positive reinforcement or treatment from Peltra.

Students of the Mayikprolollan had their tuition paid for by their rich families, received a free entrance because of familial connections, or secured a path within after showing tremendous skill. For these students, they were free to leave whenever they wished, most never bothering to take the Master Trial and technically own the rights of a full Magi of the Mayikprolollan as they either decided they had trained far enough, their teacher decided

they had reached their maximum potential, or personal business brought them back to their homelands.

But neither Aeschraes nor Axiaothea could leave. Aeschraes's ambition was too high. He would never go back to his brothers and beg for forgiveness, only awaiting a life as a disfavored fourth son with no chance to prove himself. The only way he could decide his own fate, and be able to drag himself above his siblings, would be to attain the title of a Magi of the Mayikprolollan and use it and his rank to grow more prestige than his siblings and supplant them as the family's most powerful Magi. For Axiaothea, the occasional hunter still made their way into the Mayikprolollan to be killed by the faculty or Axiaothea herself, and she had nothing to await her back home besides yet another cage to control her. She despised the Mayikprolollan and their blatant attempts to force her to their will, but the only way for her to gain freedom in some form would be to finish the Trial.

The Mayikprolollan's council had an issue, however, as did Magister Peltra. They needed puppets to control Aversaria, their goal for generations, and Peltra had to save her reputation. While she had created the two most powerful students in the Mayikprolollans history, she had continued to fail in controlling them. Had she broken their friendship? Possibly, at least they thought they had. There were still doubts, odd moments between the two, times when both would disappear at roughly the same time and have plenty of excuses when they returned. But they were also bitter in their competition, and frequently attacked the other. This may have been to their plan, but they had taken to breaking Peltra's rules and orders to fight one another just as often as they had broken them to continue their friendship.

It had become clear that, despite their wishes, they could not make them both puppets. Their relationship, or their rivalry, or both, was simply too strong. As long as they had the other to hold their focus and drag the other forward, even after they were both to graduate, then the council could never break them. Only with all remnants of personal ties destroyed, after one of them was in the Mayikprolollan's hands as one of their personal Magi without the distraction of the other, only then would they be pliable enough to be made their puppet. If one were to kill the other, then they could firmly push the blame on to them. Both so the Mayikprolollan could have enough plausible deniability with their dynasties, but also so that they could finally use it to break down the mind of the survivor.

And worst of all, Peltra's reputation was on the line. A legendary Magi who had long served as a Spellsworn in the Legions; a storied adventurer who had found the legendary Tomb of Drachanex Parth'ularag and slew one of the legendary five brother-gods of the cyclopeans, Pyurth'a'raganora'daxis, despite the deaths of thirty equally legendary figures of her time; and personal bodyguard to Aautokratir Ischenios for over a decade after, Aversarians largely crediting her for stopping over two hundred assassination attempts and being the only reason Ischenios had survived for so long, her leaving to join the Mayikprolollan the most accepted reason assassin's finally reached him thereafter.

To fail in twisting these students, and continue to establish herself as still the Magister of the Mayikprolollan who had never once failed to turn the rough and useless children the council gave her into the era's greatest Magi and political puppets, would be the greatest blemish upon her record. The first true failure. Perhaps more than this, some tales would say Peltra was afraid. That, perhaps, Peltra did not truly care about twisting them into the council's puppets. She cared about controlling them, understanding that the two children would bring forth apocalypse if allowed to remain free with so much anger and power. That if she failed to break the two, they would break Aeras itself.

And so the council and Peltra agreed. The ending of each of their trials would be a duel. To the death. One one student could become a Magi of the Mayikprolollan. The other would die, and all political blame shifted upon

the other, with the hastily written rules and charters around the duel flexible enough to give the council deniability in having ‘forced’ the death. Of course, this meant the rules were incredibly flexible, and they wrote many of them on the spot before the duel, but they were clear that the last student standing would win, and the other would have to die.

Both went through a series of tasks, observations, and rituals to decide if they had achieved their potential. They passed these easily, each breaking many records and easily proving their power. Axiaothea and Aeschraes were led to a tournament ground after a month of trial, and informed the victor would be a Master, the other would earn nothing but disgrace. They would only have victory when one was dead.

The duel was apocalyptic. Axiaothea and Aeschraes pit themselves against the other as Peltra and the council watched. Contemporaneous accounts mention that at first, there had been seats and areas for observation for the students and faculty, but within ten minutes, all sheltered in holdfasts across the Academy as the destruction they wreathed across the site nearly killed them all.

It lasted six hours. This was unheard of, possibly the longest duel committed outside of folk-lore and religious fables. By magic’s nature, most Magi consider great and powerful strikes superior in duels, as to get the most out of their body’s power before it drains and because none before had anywhere near this much power stored within them. Not only that, but the strikes themselves were exceptionally powerful, and the Mayikprolollan’s council would speak that they had not yet believed a Magi could use such power for so long.

By the end, both Axiaothea and Aeschraes were near to bleeding to death upon the stones. The entire tournament ground was a blasted ruin, and the area was so laden with magic that the council declared it too dangerous to tread on for decades after. Peltra and the council were both forced to withdraw several hundred yards and erect barriers of both stone and magic to protect themselves. Both students were so covered in lacerations; acid, heat, and cold burns; and had drained and spilled so much blood from the other that gore completely hid their skin and steam and magic openly radiated from their bodies that their bodies actively burned and scarred from the magic-sickness.

The end of the event is the only one actually recorded in complete detail as the council had both been busy hiding for the main battle and had been so desperately afraid of their decision’s future repercussions that they detailed and notarized the entire event with hopes to stave off vengeance with legal backing.

Aeschraes fell to his knees, verging on death. He and Axiaothea exchanged several words, too far from earshot to be recorded, and both laughed, cried, and then both at once. The council and Peltra both seemed nervous at this sudden sign of solidarity, and the council’s obsessive writings noted that:

“The two had kindly smiles for one another that were coated in blood, but observers as astute as the Council of the Mayikprolollan could see that these were devil smiles. They seemed to have wolf teeth, and their twisted visages of evil and destruction made their demonic blood clear and that Aversaria should never fault the council for failing to control such unearthly beings.”

As Aeschraes seemed about to pass out, Peltra encouraged Axiaothea to finish him. After Axiaothea responded with anger at this, Peltra shouted at Axiaothea from across the tournament grounds.

“Remember, girl, you’ll spend the rest of your sorry life in some other lecher’s bed if you do not kill him!” is the most accepted account of what she said.

Unverifiable tales would say Axiaothea gave Aeschraes a sad look, who nodded at her in acceptance, and then she instead attacked a surprised Peltra. The Magister, despite her fame and power, only just barely blocked the

spell thanks to Axiaothea's collapsing health. Peltra managed a single shot in retaliation, piercing Axiaothea's stomach with a summoned blade, but a second strike caused Axiaothea's tutor to be charged with so much electrical force that Peltra's blood instantly turned to vapor and her body exploded violently.

The Aironoian is then said to have readied an insanely powerful spell that swept the field with fire. The flames danced around Aeschraes, not harming him, and also within only inches of the cowering council. The council record (edited multiple times over the next decades in secret, though the public largely knew each edit as they made them due to constant council infighting leading to revelation) reads:

"The foul Axiaothea, so murderous in her famous blood-rage that had consumed so many innocents over so many years, prepared a fiery spell no doubt prepared from the rituals of an ancient and evil non-human civilization. We of the Council of the Mayikprolollan bravely told her this: 'We will not bow! We will not prostrate to so foul a one as you!'

"Foul Axiaothea then ignited Arch-Magi Olitaxinos and sent him over the side of the mountain, to which the Council of the Mayikprolollan bravely then said: 'We will do as you say! For we wish no further bloodshed to fall upon the innocent!' for we of the Council of the Mayikprolollan had cleverly deduced we could trick the she-beast into leaving the Academy and its many valued acolytes were we to pretend to follow her wishes."

Despite the lack of agreement most have with the Mayikprolollan's account of the events, most scholars agree the council pleaded for mercy as she threatened to kill them all. Axiaothea demanded the council immediately rewrite the rules, the paper and quill still in front of them from frantic editing just before the duel, so that nobody would have to die. Last man standing would be the Magi, but a death would be solely the council's responsibility, and not the pupils. The council agreed to her demands, and her blood-loss and excessive magical use finally caught up, and she collapsed. Aeschraes turned to look at her, blinked as the council cowered and cried, and then too collapsed.

By the rules of the competition, Aeschraes had won. Most spoke in these early years after that Axiaothea was the true winner, and that Aeschraes had only won because of technicality. Not only did he only last seconds more, but Axiaothea had also proven herself by destroying her teacher and clearly having been able to wipe out the council while Aeschraes struggled to even remain conscious.

They gave Aeschraes the rank of Magister of the Mayikprolollan. Axiaothea gained prestige but had earned no legal backing from the Mayikprolollan, and they considered her curriculum over. The Council hastily sent her back to her family before she could awake and likely kill everyone in the academy, and Aeschraes recovered in a place of honor with the school and then left immediately after for the legions. He would soon join State Legio XXI 'Anesimasios'. While a State Legion, the most elite and centrally controlled armies of Aversaria, Aeschraes's family, maintained deep connections with them. They were an Etepezean legion, the Governorate that his family more often than not ruled, and his dynasty had been a long patron and sponsor of the Legion they oft led.

They were also the most prestigious Legion in Aversaria, often nicknamed 'the Aautokrati's Own' and Aversaria had honored them by allowing their name to be that of the reigning Aautokrati. Not only was he connected, but he was also extremely powerful, and after a public display and furious politicking from both Aeschraes and his family, he was Legon within a year. Even as Legon of the most respected Legion in Aversaria, he still faced great disrespect from those he met. His duel in the Mayikprolollan was famous, but tales seemed not to care about his substantial power, but of Axiaothea being 'cheated' from victory.

His own men even named Aeschraes 'the Second' behind his back. Even though he was clearly the most powerful Magi in his family, he was also the murderer of his own father and many others, and had somehow left a

duel in which he proved himself more powerful than possibly any Magi in history with a worse reputation than he had entered. Politically, he was nowhere closer to gaining power and breaking free of the constraints of his family, and his prestige had somehow diminished.

On the other side of Aversaria, Axiaothea's family took back their scion and quickly deemed necessary to remove her from their care. Luck came to her father, Governor Metricon, when Aautokratir Anesimasios finally announced his intentions to marry. Anesimasios had been striving to end the east-west political divide of Aversaria and had lived as a bachelor in order to keep the nobles pacified, most scheming to marry into his dynasty instead of planning assassination or revolt. He had apparently decided he had established his rule enough to stave off the nobility, and sought the union of a powerful eastern family to merge the divide. Metricon knew just the bride to do so.

Grand ceremony followed, Axiaothea still being far too wounded to break out of the new cage they had put her within. Many claimed this was a new hope for Aversaria, for the glorious reunion of east and west during which all would finally come back together as kin, over which Anesimasios and Metricon would forge a golden age of Imperial renewal.

Aversaria followed Anesimasios's wedding ceremony with almost an entire year of celebration and festivities for the peasantry and nobility both. He was increasingly being called the Aautokratir who would save Aversaria, many peasants naming him the 'Kindblood' for his great generosity. Not only were the peasantry enjoying the first moments of optimism they'd possessed for generations, the nobility too celebrated. The wedding was the first genuine chance at bridging the east-west divide, the first chance to turn their eyes from the hundred petty wars between the nobility and the governorates, and an opportunity for profits for all.

Most seemed in agreement that Anesimasios and Axiaothea would be the ones to herald the golden age Aversaria had desperately prayed for. Not only did the Aautokratir promise to end the ancient divides, but he had even begun an impressive series of reforms with the exceptionally rare backing of the nobility.

He'd reign in the Mayikprolollan's powers and establish control of how they tutor their students (likely from Axiaothea's prodding); he would revise the now-ancient laws pertaining to slavery and citizenship that had remained untouched since the Agionist Rebellions; He would give the Conclave that managed the many faiths of the Aautokrata more power and allowed to reign in the increasingly schismatic faiths; an impressive infrastructure and building campaign would return Opakhasia to some sense of prosperity; he would establish of 'fortress-cities' inspired by the Iyrossi Communes on his familial lands in Katraddia and eventually spread to the rest of the governorate to centralize the power there and end its many petty warlord-aautokratirs; and he would begin a massive series of tax reform to allow the governor's collecting of tax from their nobles for the first time in centuries and take several massive loans from the banks of the Gisreddes to help fund this.

Axiaothea, despite her obvious distaste for her position as a simple wife, by all reports took to the role. While openly incendiary with her husband, she strived to support his plans and goals, and court records say that Anesimasios valued her for her shrewd intellect and political mind. Several court officials even noted that Axiaothea had appeared to warm to her husband, and had grown close with him in time.

Aeschraes's own fortunes were mixed. While he struggled to find any respect in his Legion, Anesimasios valued the connection with his dynasty to help control the nobility of Etepezea and often called upon Aeschraes to consult upon matters of magic or warfare. Despite this, however, Aeschraes would often complain of many slights, both minor and major. This was because of his continued position as junior in his family, his brothers often being consulted in matters without Aeschraes's notice. There were also many rumblings, especially in the decades after,

that Aeschraes's many slights were in fact caused by the prodding of Axiaothea, who still wished to see her former rival falter.

The most known of these, and the only one speculators could firmly mark against Axiaothea, is the denial of Aeschraes's request to be declared Arch-Legion of four damaged legions in Katraddia in order to put down Katraddian warlord Demthox 'the Heart Eater'. Anesamios is reported to have been open to the proposal, but Axiaothea stated it would be incendiary to the Katraddian nobility to grant their legions to an Etepezean, and that it would destabilize the delicate balance of power among the legions. Whether this was a simple political move or a simple cover to slight Aeschraes is unknown.

Despite the conflict, contemporaries recorded Aeschraes and Axiaothea as having sent several letters to one another in this brief interim and to have spoken occasionally during official business, though all the letters were later intentionally or unintentionally lost in Legio XXI's Coup of Oraispol. Their relationship is unclear, but there seems to be little sign that their rivalry, if it had continued, was anywhere near as incendiary as it had become in the Mayikprolollan. All reports at the time seemed to agree the two had, if not become friends once more, settled into some form of mutual respect.

Aversaria seemed ready to flourish, Axiaothea and Aeschraes both seeming to represent a new era of the joining of east and west.

To not only have bridged the divide and earned love from the nobility and peasantry both, but also propose the most radical reform campaign of any Aautokratir in centuries with their full support, marked Anesimasios as possibly the greatest Aversarian statesman in generations. Or perhaps things were not as optimistic as they appeared. Perhaps while the nobility celebrated his reforms, they resented them in private. Or perhaps the forces that he did anger, those he felt his supporters outweighed, were too powerful after all. Or perhaps he had put too much trust in those around him, and those who he valued as lieutenants.

During one of the many feasts in honor of the marriage, several months after its official consecration, guests said Anesamios was in a rare troubled mood. The aautokratir, normally quite gregarious with his guests and always setting time aside to speak privately with each of his guests in order to ensure their approval and also search for any hint of betrayal, was far more reserved than usual. He sat upon his throne and grimly stared at the feast, attempts to cheer him through festival shows or by words from close friends failing. Even Axiaothea, who he normally attempted to lavish with praise and gifts publicly, faced rebuttal when attempting to speak with him. This confounded the nobility, and many prepared counter-spells in private just in case this was the foretelling of the increasingly common court purges his predecessors had become known for.

Legion Aeschraes was also in attendance with members of Legio XXI as guests of honor after putting down the Katraddian warlord Demthox 'the Heart Eater'. One of the most noted happenings of the feast was several running conversations between him and Axiaothea, often done in private or far enough for other guests not to overhear, with rituals prepared to ensure none listened in on their conversation.

The words between the two are of course unknown, and reports of what they appeared to have said are incredibly contradictory and likely apocryphal. Depending on the tale, the two had a tearful reunion in conversation and rediscovered their (alleged) lost love, secretly plotted to murder Anesimasios together, argued with one another after one of them announced they would kill the Aautokratir, swore an eternal rivalry with the other, or any combination of these or a thousand other suggestions.

What contemporaries reported with surety, however, is the feast's ending. Anesimasios appeared even more troubled after watching one of Axiaothea and Aeschraes's discussions; and even more so after a servant handed

him a missive informing Anesimasios of the destruction of Aironoian Noble Legions XXI 'Heartrenders', XLIV 'The Kartharaddi's Fear', LXIV 'Gravitas', and XCII 'Swords of Tharenion' in the ongoing Three Cities War.

Anesimasios stood suddenly and announced that he would have a toast of bloodwine to Legon Aeschraes, declaring him in a rather surprising turn to be the 'greatest of his friends and allies' and 'the most honorable of the legons of Aversaria', before announcing that it would take the might of his storied State Legion to end the eastern rebellion. Aeschraes appeared both surprised at the sudden praise and incredibly troubled, showing a rare amount of nervousness from his normal imperious demeanor as he stuttered out his thanks and promises to control the rebellious eastern merchant leagues.

Axiaothea then handed Aautokratir Anesimasios a glass of his bloodwine, which Anesimasios drank far faster and slovenly than was normal for him or appropriate for his station. He took several steps down from his dais, smiled at Axiaothea and shook the hand of the late-arriving Kothexia Othrycia of Nadost, and then died. Blood suddenly spilled from his mouth and onto the closest feast table, and Anesimasios struggled to stand for a moment, desperately attempted to perform an unknown spell, and then collapsed. The panic was immediate.

Oraispol immediately fell into great chaos as Anesimasios's guard and the visiting Legionnaires from the XXI rushed to protect the fallen Aautokratir and attempt to revive him. Magi and surgeons were rushed to the aautokratir while the nobility panicked and quickly began retreating from the city as the stench of civil war suddenly fell upon Aversaria anew.

Often noted between descriptions of the chaos are Axiaothea and Aeschraes. Axiaothea was apparently distraught at the event, rushing to her husband's side and demanding he get up to no avail, though many claimed this as a simple cover. It is also noted that she stood up after realizing her husband was dead and had not shed a single tear, did not appear any sadder than she had before the event, and possessed a demeanor both 'grim and horrifying'. Her supporters would later point out that Axiaothea showing any emotion other than annoyance or anger was already an aberration, detractors claim it as evidence for her initial reaction being false.

Aeschraes had been one of the first to the Aautokratir's side, and was also the first to announce someone had poisoned him after discovering the chalice at his feet. He would take command of the aautokratir's guard in the immediate aftermath and direct them to stop further visitors from leaving the city, and then gave the chalice to several of his men to safeguard for later investigation. They would lose the chalice within the day, however, and many claim that Aeschraes had in fact poisoned the aautokratir and had his men destroy the evidence.

Before Aeschraes relinquished control to the local legion and fled the city, soldiers noted him and Axiaothea having a last conversation. There are likewise greatly contradictory tellings of this event, most tales either saying that the two celebrated an assassination well performed, immediately accused the other of killing Anesimasios, shared a final loving kiss or a final platonic embrace, or simply asked the other what had just happened. These words are the more speculated of the conversations the two had the night, as this conversation was the last time anyone would know of the two speaking in person.

Whether they had reaffirmed or killed their friendship, however, Legon Aeschraes and his men fled Oraispol. Speculation was immediate and frantic. Aversaria had assassinated over fifteen aautokratirs (often within days of coronation and by their immediate successor) in the last century, but most considered them poor and controversial rulers and many had possessed both clear means and motive or even openly claimed to having done so in the immediate aftermath. Anesimasios, however, was universally well-loved and without major rivals. Not only this, but his high amount of support meant that none had expected any to be brave enough to kill them, and his cooperation with the east and local support in the west meant that the most likely and major factions to assassinate

an aautokratir in Aversaria had been firmly on his side.

While many pointed out that Anesimasios never actually performed any of his desired reforms, and that the only proof of his competence was the (impressive regardless) reigning in the nobility and east and west factions, the people of Aversaria mourned. Perhaps this was only because they had not given him the chance to fail them, but the people rapidly declared Anesimasios a martyr, and tearful crowds gave solemn prayers across the realm. Whether his reforms would have been successful or another miserable failure, his untimely death immediately cemented him as a hero, and meant that accusing one's rival of the murder had become an incredibly common and powerful political tool.

The only ones who did not accuse another seemed to be the small faction arguing that the aautokratir's death had been a suicide. He had been preparing reform for a decade and desperately dragging his way past the nobility, had been a bachelor most of his life with only a minimal interest in women or sex, and his dreadful mood in his final hours were (in their estimation) a clear sign of depression, and his gluttonous chugging of his poison an obvious example of his eagerness to die. This argument has remained controversial for nearly a century since.

Detractors accused Legon Aeschraes, many claiming that he had assassinated Anesimasios because of slights against his prestige and so that he could attain higher power through taking the throne, the losing of the chalice especially damning. Aeschraes would often point out that Anesimasios had just given him an extremely prestigious compliment that politically would have placed him at the level of or higher than his brothers, as well as an especially lucrative chance to gain glory by securing Aironoi that would have won him the support of eastern nobles that he would have needed if he truly wanted to take power. Not to mention that having his own men lose the chalice would have been far too obvious for a royal assassin to do. His detractors would regularly point out his own nervousness at the declarations, and that he would have ordered the assassination before he learnt of his new standing.

Governor Metricon of Aironoi faced his own level of accusations. Anesimasios may have wanted to join east and west with Metricon's blessing, but the merger also proved an explicit threat to Aironoi's increasing position as the dominate Governorate of Aversaria. Were Aironoi to reconcile with Etepezea, Aironoi's trajectory would by necessity freeze, and Metricon would lose his dynasty's chance to secure rule of the true center of prosperity and power in Aversaria. Others pointed out that his own daughter was in a prime place to kill the aautokratir, that he had mysteriously not traveled to Anesimasios's festival feasts, and that his marrying of Axiaothea placed one of his own children in an easy position to usurp power. Metricon would later blame his own daughter, and use this to deflect much blame, though his honesty in the accusations was uncertain.

Many suspected the Mayikprolollan, the council angered by Anesimasios's desire to reform the institution and either afeared of Axiaothea's growing power in the court or finally hoping to place her or Aeschraes upon the throne as puppets. The Council of the Mayikprolollan would give a flurry of reasons they did not deserve suspicion, including the fact that they had clearly not managed control of their former pupils, and that the ensuing political chaos failed to bring them any form of substantial gains. They would rapidly rise in suspicion after several members of the council publicly declared that Arch-Magi Iornos had ordered the assassination and was thus to be executed. This suspicion would immediately disappear, however, when the following series of inept political chaos that consumed the council would see thirty Arch-Magi purged and over eighty council members and instructors accused of ordering the assassination whenever politically expedient.

Governor Bozycsarxa of Katraddia faced accusations, as well as several Katraddian nobles. Many suspected Anesimasios of planning far more radical reforms in the north than he publically claimed and assured the

northerners of. Namely, the court widely speculated that Anesimasios had finally planned to divide Katraddia into smaller governorates to ease its administration, declare its governorial legions controlled by a co-governor of Imperial choice, shrinking and reinforcing portions of the indefensible border with the northeast, expand Malcois even further across the Eramasic River, and deploy multiple State Legions to enforce Imperial control until the governorate stabilized and the many local warlords were subdued or dead. Bozycsarxa was quick to point out that Anesimasios was her own cousin and half-Katraddian himself, that she had enjoyed a fantastic relationship with the aautokrator and secured many boons for her governorate, and that the ensuing chaos of his assassination somehow led to the situation in the north worsening even further than it had before.

Blame and accusation fell upon many others. The Orydrian Dynastic League had been in a series of scandals over the finances of their merchant companies, and Anesimasios had threatened to assume royal control of their assets if they failed to purge themselves of traitors to the throne. Magi and self-proclaimed 'Sub-Aautokratia' Delendea Bhatajharax, leader of the Three Cities Rebellion, had long claimed she would one day kill Anesimasios herself were he not to follow her increasingly erratic demands. Many (allegedly) Aversarian warlords in Katraddia would claim to have done the assassination for prestige or accuse their rivals of dishonorably ordering the killing, and the Aversarian nobility of course rapidly pointed fingers at every single political rival who could conceivably have done the act.

To list all the minor accusations made against increasingly doubtful culprits would be impossible. Four Marcher Anti-Magic Orders proudly declared to have done the act, only to be censored by the Conclave of Raocourt who condemned the death (Anesimasios had long attempted to improve northern relations) and then immediately faced accusations by multiple Kalthipsomian nobles and the high king of Chevalie. Several Aversarians then accused the high king, before the suspect of the day became Kalathipsomian bandit leader Zicys 'the Lover of Widows'. After Zicys crafted an exceptionally detailed and well-written letter over his alibi (raiding the village of Thurione for sport) suspects were made of Sjalvolki and Kardwen chiefs, seven Kashiryan Magi sects, Öltenic warlord Drudgidic 'the Many Masked', traveling Marcher spy Led Vigaron, several Liches of the Lichdoms (several of which even sent proclamations south that they had done so which were completely ignored). The Colonial Authority in Sarradon would even attempt to accuse multiple Wardenite rulers, begging for reinforcements from the homeland to 'avenge' the aautokrator.

Assassinations were not uncommon in Aversaria, but the assassination of Anesimasios had no single figure with clear means, motive or opportunity. It would prove perhaps the most high-profile and storied assassination in Aversarian history. To make it worse, with the chalice lost and political machinations and chaos causing no autopsy of Anesimasios's body before his funeral pyre (likely at the pressuring of nobles who benefited from the confusion), it was not even sure if poison had been the culprit. Many claimed that Anesimasios's attempted spell was a counter-spell against an attack, or that the murderer had poisoned him earlier, or that he had been dying of a cancer.

More than any other, however, accusations settled on Axiaothea. Many declared that her history of murdering those who controlled her leash and her clear 'blood-madness' meant she was likely to brutalize any man within arm's distance of her. Every public disagreement she had with Anesimasios went from a clear sign she was his respected equal to an obvious example of how she had publicly plotted and desired to kill her husband. Likewise, Axiaothea had never been private about desiring power and freedom, and which better way to attain these things than to become the absolute ruler of the world's greatest empire? Even if she did not wish this herself, she had possibly killed Anesimasios at the orders of her father, or at the orders of other nobles, or by puppet-

masters in the Mayikprolollan. And most damning of all, she was the one who had handed Anesimasios the chalice which most believed poisoned him.

She, of course, protested this. She claimed to have found Anesimasios a good man and pointed out time and time again that killing her husband so soon into his reign and when she remained so controversial would have been the most idiotic of plays. She had gained far more than enough power and freedom as his wife, especially as, by all reports, Anesimasios had no interest in pressuring her to join his marriage bed or possibly even in the fairer sex altogether. She had extreme amounts of autonomy to do as she wished, and could satisfy her desire for political power through her valued counsel to her husband. Others believed she had done the act with Aeschraes, out of a desire to take power with him or to marry over Anesimasios's corpse, their secretive conversations considered highly suspect.

Whether they had found forgiveness or become true rivals during these meetings, however, Aeschraes saw his chance to achieve the power he desired. He only needed an excuse. The two appeared to have little interest in directly mentioning the other thereafter, but already their camps increasingly pointed the finger at the other. Lines were being drawn rapidly, the two groups consuming all others. The easterners claimed Aeschraes had ordered the assassination and wished to blame Axiaothea to degrade Aironoi, and the westerners claimed the opposite.

In the following Blood Senate, Axiaothea placed herself into the listings despite objections from her family, who had sent her sister and childhood companion, Methenia. Methenia was her father's chosen heir-apparent, as he wished for his much more agreeable and politically trained daughter to take control of the realm. Not only this, but he also publically claimed that his daughter had performed the assassination and betrayed the family, and wished for her removal from the dynasty.

There were over two hundred in the following listings, even after the standard brutal politicking had ended with most applicants being killed or pressured to withdraw. Nearly every major noble family in Aversaria was in attendance, for all knew that the Empire sat on the verge of civil war, and knew that whoever controlled the throne would hold the advantage.

Axiaothea entered the tournament grounds and faced her sister as all watched, even her father. To lose would be to return to her family's control at her most fortunate, to win would finally give her control.

The blast of magic that Axiaothea unleashed killed every single living being besides herself within leagues of the Blood Senate's grounds. She had blasted the ground to ash, and she stood seven steps deep into the ground for the great crater she had formed. Observers from as far as the Imperial Isle reported the beam of light burning out of the horizon and bringing clouds to swirl.

In a moment, she had assassinated the heads of nearly every major dynasty, as well as their chosen strongest Magi, and hundreds of other members of the court and local citizenry. Aversaria reeled in shock, and the succession became even more unclear. Axiaothea had won the Blood Senate in a way that cemented herself as the strongest Aversarian Magi in history. She had also done it in the most politically devastating manner, and Aversaria nearly fell to civil war just over the matter of whether her power as a Magi outweighed the need for vengeance.

Aeschraes jumped at this. As she traveled home from the Blood Senate, his Legion rushed towards Oraispol and performed a coup of the city, purging it of Axiaothea loyalists and forcing her to flee east. He wrote the great Declaration of Blood-Right, which was circulated across Aversaria immediately. In it, he decried Axiaothea as a pretender and the murderer of Anesimasios, and the results of the Blood Senate to be illegal. Axiaothea traveled east to her family lands, the succession of Aironoi in chaos with Metricon and Methenia both dead and no autokrator to declare a new governor. Axiaothea entered Asiupoli and used her (disputed) authority to take

control of the Governorate and declared herself the rightful Aautokratia. In the west, Aeschraes did the same.

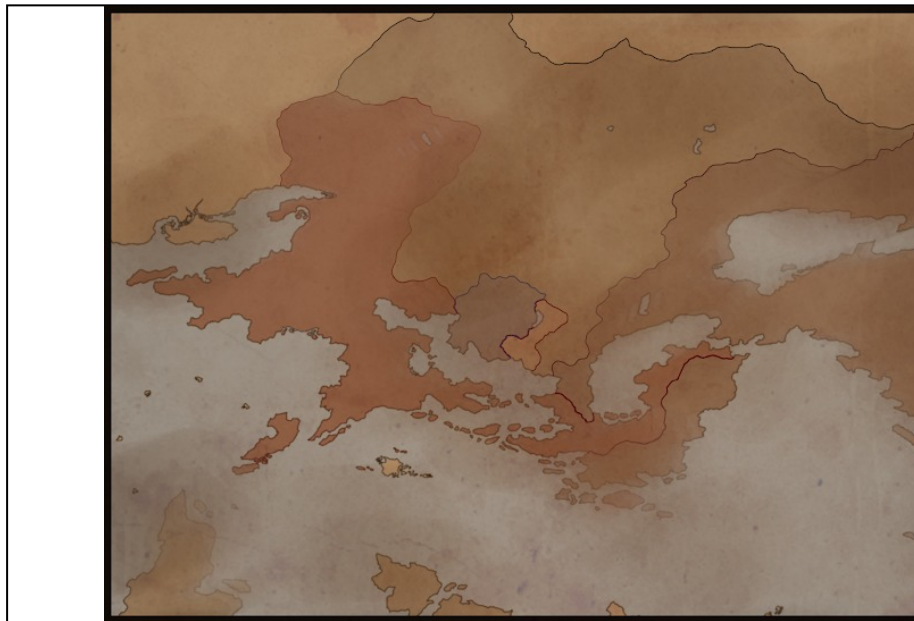
### A Whispered Sentence

*Aautokratir Legon Aeschraes, recorded as being muttered under h  
by Amon 'the Pious' in 1196 IS. The words caught popular imag  
soon after retellings of it spread, inspiring new waves of speculatio  
the relationship between the warring pretenders.*

The Mayikprolollan, they want me to send envoy to the  
Mayikprolollan? I'll kill them all for what they did to us- I.  
me. I'll kill them all.

Etepezea and Aironoi, the strongest and most important Governorates of Aversaria, were at war. Kalathipsomi quickly declared for Aeschraes and the poorer and noble-entrenched north of Opakhasia followed, while the wealthy reform-minded and merchant-led south of the Governorate went for Axiaothea. Katraddia had long burned in its own civil conflicts already, and Malcois began its own civil war between those wishing to remain neutral and those who believed Aeschraes's cause was just.

While Aversaria had faced many civil wars, only one would become known as the Imperial Civil War. The following fourteen years of conflict were the most devastating in Aversarian history, Aeschraes and Axiaothea both so great and powerful and with circles comprising the most powerful generation in the history of Magi to that point with great legions that marched and destroyed one another.



*Map of the Imperial Civil War by Cartographer-Initiate Bryn Archos Aldanawodizi in 1186 IS. He would be murdered by the Aeschraeist aligned 'Order of the Pureblood' mercenary company at his orders, as the widely circulated map did not show him in control of the majority of Aversaria and displayed both pretenders as equal in rank.*

Opakhasia burned and faced such brutal devastation that the southeast became a blasted wasteland of latent magical energies in which nobody besides disparate scavenger-clans could survive. Malcois faced its greatest slave revolt in history, the Iyrossi finally rebelling after a thousand years of slavery and the rest of the Malcoisiac slave caste joining them after both of the warring sides of the Governorate destroyed one another. Kalathipsomi burned from an endless series of competing warlords and shifting loyalties within the Governorate. Axiaothea betrayed the ancient truces with the Öltenic and brought order in the east into collapse. Etepezea crumbled from the intrigues of its own court as an endless array of nobility seemed to believe now their chance to cast down Aeschraes's ancient dynasty.

Katraddia perhaps took worse than any other, especially by its end. Not only did their mercenary

Hēprasitosiac Legions pledge themselves to whichever warlord paid them the most, and not only did their many self-styled Aautokratirs tear the region apart or attempt great invasions of Aironoi, but they faced endless incursions from the neighboring heathens. A thousand tribes, a thousand cultures and faiths, all sat just within or outside of Katraddia's borders. Partic, Huegodoc, Mondecny. But the Aversarians feared one group more than any other. They were the Sjalvolki, an ancient tribal people ignorant of their descent from those few surviving humans who slew Aersanon and who worshipped a faith unknowingly centered on the Godherja. They were warlike yet honor bound, their faith lending them an obsession with ritual hunting of great monsters and a culture that viewed Magi as honored members of their local villages who should always remain at their edge and away from honest company.

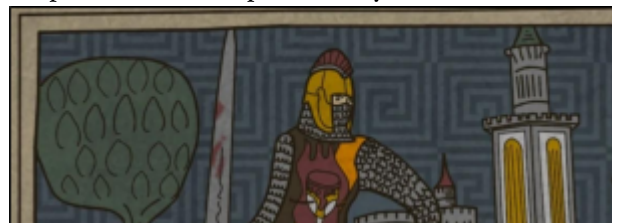
Sjalvolki culture was split between north and south, the northerners being known for honor and conservatism, loyal to the tribal ways of their forefathers and rejecting Magi more than any of their kin. The southerners were more cosmopolitan, having long settled along the great rivers instead of living in the mountains and forests like the northerners, and had developed significant works of poetry and saw the value in maintaining relations with other cultures. Both were not so distinct for foreigners to know the difference, for all of them were proud warriors and savage foes who regularly raided into Aversaria and did battle with the Magi for glory and for their riches. Even before the Aversarians had come, they had long battled with the now-ancient Kartharaddi, and never in their history had either empires been able to subjugate them or any Sjalvolki unite them.

In great numbers they traveled southwest and ranged deep into Katraddia. They smashed those State, Noble and Mercenary Legions that attempted to stop them, and dozens of other cultures from within and outside Katraddia followed them in with great raids of the Imperials or with dreams of retaking their lost homelands.

As the war dragged on, Aversaria would see hundreds of legendary heroes and villains. Arch-Legan Eiliadda, Magi Kasathox Oseaythx, the Oathbound Thirty, Legon Karthyn Delenel, Magi Santhos 'Blood-Drinker', Sir Mathos den va Seychanax, the 'Blighted Witch', or the Lich Petrovos Petrynix. They came and passed over the fourteen years of brutal warfare, along with a hundred petty warlords, pretenders, bandit kings and other factions who each joined or fought in their own war. As the first half of the second decade reached, both Aeschraes and Axiaothea were desperate.

Not only did they hold equal amounts of remaining power, but they had also achieved two equal reputations. Aeschraes was no longer called 'Second' but more commonly as the 'Blood Aautokrator', so named for his exacting brutality and his iron-grip rule over the 'Oraispol Aautokrata'. Others would name Axiaothea the 'Magi of Blades', so named for her impressive martial ability, which she used on the front-lines just as often as she used magic. She would claim many enemies, such as Alphioxix the Elder at the Battle of the Stellarnar Fields or Legon 'Darkblood' in a magical duel in the citadel of Axarathad.

Aeschraes himself had slain many, Legon Mechondagr through an ordered execution, Amon 'the Pious' with poison, and the Orydrian Dynastic League with a four-month long ritual that turned every single one of their cities and members to ash after spies informed him they had sold a shipment of weapons to an Axiaothea-aligned mercenary company. This spell took months of preparation however, and would have been impossible had the Orydrian's had stronger Magi or knew how Aeschraes intended to punish them. A powerful symbol of Aeschraes's





*Aautokratia Axiaothea slays Legon Alphioxix the Elder, companion of Aeschraes, at the Battle of the Stellarnar Fi*

power, but nowhere near enough to destroy Axiaothea.

Both had become desperate. They saw their rightful realm crumbling around them, and the increasing fragility of their claims to rule. The more they destroyed the realm against one another, the more the realm seemed to turn on them for causing its destruction. It seemed to be a race for not who would take Aversaria, but who would end up killing it in doing so.

They each sent explorers across every ancient library and tomb in Aversaria and to every library and place of power around the known world. Paid researchers from the Aversarian Cartographer's Union, hired foreign mercenary groups, or small and elite units in enemy territory searching for the oldest of lore. They used every weapon and ritual they found against one another with devastating effect, and Aversaria in her entirety went from one of the richest and most prospering regions of the world to an unpopulated wasteland wracked by constant famine and disease. Magic had turned once great cities to ash and some of the world's most prosperous farmland was now forever uninhabitable. The largest economy in the Continent and its most powerful Empire was now a blighted land empty of citizenry. More than half of the population had died before it finally ended.

Both Axiaothea and Aeschraes learned of Self-Replicating Blood Magic during their schooling and dreamed of finding the ancient spell to destroy the other. The Sarradonians had nearly wiped out their entire continent with it, and they had possessed half of Aversaria's magical power. Both reasoned their personal Magi Cabals and their own power combined would be what the ritual needed to be controlled. The Sarradonians had lacked power and had not understood what they played with. The Aversarians could control and refine it, target it at their enemies, wipe out all who fought them in an instant with no chance of the spell being blocked, and could easily end it whenever they wished. Once their foe was dead, they could hold the ritual above the heads of the world, securing their rule forever. Their personal hunters scoured Sarradon as they searched for any sign of the long-erased ritual.

It is unknown if they finally found it or if they had both found enough of the ritual and had become so desperate that they attempted to guess or deduce the rest. Both found Self-Replicating Blood Magic near simultaneously, and both prepared to use it while they knew the risks it brought to all of Aversaria. They both raced to complete the ritual first, and the victor was Aeschraes.

Aeschraes had since formed a new family, a political marriage with a vassal dynasty granting him several children. His oldest was still a young girl in 1200 IS, named Arias after his lost sister and possibly the only person he still remembered fondly. He had around him a cabal of the hundred most powerful Magi of his era (those not among Axiaothea's hundred finest, at least), and legions of slaves and soldiers both.

He gave them all to perform the ritual.

Romanticization would later say that Aeschraes lost his last chance of redemption when he sacrificed Arias to perform his ritual, along with the rest of his children, his wife, and hundreds of slaves and less important Magi. He and two dozen of his greatest Magi began the ritual and aimed Self-Replicating Blood Magic directly at the east, hoping to kill Axiaothea in Asiupoli and annihilate a dozen other major lords and rebel cities.

That night in 1200 IS would be the beginning of the world's true end. It would bring forth Frodbrokna.



*Map of the initial targets of Self-Replicating Blood Magic by former Aeschraeist Magi Despexir Yind 'the Fairest Witch' Katronas. Katronas was one of the only survivors of Aeschraes's cabal after Frodbrokna, and was the only one who dared speak of the events while in hiding, largely doing so on threat of death after being captured while disguised as a peasant farmer by Legio XXI 'Axiaothea'. The map was likely drawn at swordpoint.*

## The Rise of the North

*1200 IS to 1254 IS and beyond*

Self-Replicating Blood Magic tore through Asiupoli and half of Aironoi, Axiaothea and her entire court wiped out in a moment along with the most powerful city in Aversaria. As every major rival turned to ash and Aversaria saw the consequence of resistance, Aeschraes and his Magi ended the spell.

Only to realize they couldn't.

They managed to only briefly pause its spread outside of the first cities when the first Magi in their ritual chambers detonated into fire. The sources are unclear if the first to die had been Magi Nycenea 'the Void Walker' or the 'Blighted Witch', but suddenly Aeschraes's cabal struggled to maintain the spell as the weight on their shoulders increased. Either Nycenea or the 'Blighted Witch' then similarly ignited, and then Axos 'Iron-Walker' melted to death from the effects of Exposure-Sickness, and then ignited another, and another burst into ash, and so forth as it got harder and harder to hold the spell and protect themselves from their discharging comrades.

As each of them died, Aversaria felt the effects. Self-Replicating Blood Magic quickly went out of control across Aironoi, and then spread across Opakhasia and Malcois, through Katraddia and into Kashirya. It burst through Oraispol and in the Black Mountains, and Marchers reported seeing the lights of burning Liches from their northernmost towers. Even lands as far and exotic as Adabyss and Kathun-Kai fell into chaos as the spell ravaged their lands.

Over half of all remaining Aversarians died along with the rest of Aeschraes's cabal, and more than a quarter of the rest of the world population would perish with them. Self-Replicating Blood Magic caused so much suffering and despair and unleashed so much magic into the world that, along with the decades leading up to the end, caused Aersanon to stir in their sleep. A single ethereal eye upon the dead god's body cracked open, Their

infinite gaze looking outward in death.

The survivors would name this event Frodbrokna.

Across the northern wayline, a giant rift into the center of the world split and cracked open, so large as to swallow entire nations as Aeras crumbled into it. In the sky above, Aervalr cracked and then shattered. A great ray of sickly green light connected the two as the great shards of Aervalr seemed to drift slowly into the Rift. Magic around the world went hay-wire as once again reality shifted, and millions more died.

Out of the Rift came the fabric of reality itself. Just as the death of Aersanon had shaken the world, so too did Their stirring. Aersanon's mind cracked and opened, and from this great hole in reality the world from within that mind spilled into the material. Every deathly thought and memory of Aersanons, every single soul who had ever passed, every single memory, dream and nightmare, all of them spilled across the world. It was the merging of the realm only gleamed and forged in the deepest slumbers of the living and the mundane. The realization of a world once only seen by the most maddened Magi and at the moment's between a Lich's death and undeath.

The location of this great void was the far northeast, somewhere east of the Mayikprolollan and at the edge of Katraddia. From it came nightmares, an ephemeral Fog that spilled out across the great forests of Katraddia and seemed to move with a mind of its own. Sometimes it would rest at the edge of rivers or gather around mountains, and other times it would rush forward or climb uphill. Within, human terror now lived. A human in the Fog stands within the realm of the ethereal, and within, it made their nightmares manifest. These are not simple thoughts, it is not the first thing that comes to one's mind when they think of what they fear. These are the deepest and most primordial forms of dread, the horrible combinations of every single thing those unfortunate enough to

### Personal Journal, Page 102

*Sir Ean Segradde in his personal journal, likely just after the Battle of the Elys  
1252 IS*

I can't think, I can't believe. Every time I close my eyes I see it again. The screaming, the death. The blood doesn't wash out, it's all I see and all times. The blood and the filth, the smell of waste leaving dying men the stench of piss and rotting flesh and the cawing of so many hungry that descended on us in the thousands.

We had just wanted money, just wanted glory. We did not know what happen, how could we? Oh god I led them there myself, I gathered up and I joined the Company myself. Forty men I brought, I walked forty their death simply for coin and glory. I had told them all I would prote as their liege, and now only I live. Who could have known? How could known they would have died in such a way?

The Sjalvolki and their Fog... the Fog they say consumes the world. To us, how could they spread such evil? I still remember the beast that str that killed the others. She was beautiful and terrible. Out of the Fog sh a young girl crying and begging for her mother. She was screaming she lost, speaking Aversarian, no doubt some camp follower or daughter o officer that had stupidly stumbled to the field.

Preddic whispered the name of his dead sister and ran forward, I follow hoping to grab the child and get her away from the death. Then the ch open, giant spider legs, a gaping maw, maggots pouring out of her fles stretched out to stand at over twice our height on top of thirty spider l Great barbed tentacles came out and began to... began to...

Oh god, by the Paths I can't stop thinking. Writing isn't helping, noth helping, oh god oh god. They'll come for me I know, they'll be here w They'll be the ones to kill me. I... I need to beat them to it. They'll nev me.

face Fog dream of in their darkest sleep.

When one dies in Aeras, their soul immediately joins the Fog. If they had died within the Fog itself and



Others needed them to. They were even had fogbeasts! Great howling night!  
treat them as master!

The battle didn't even last an hour, they just kept coming. I cleaved one near!  
with me' axe, an' she stumbled forward with her spear and kept on jabbing at  
she ran out of blood! They poured in and we couldn't do anything, grabbing  
and runnin' off with them. Then every night for the next month, they took n  
more o' us, till nobody was left.

So if you call me craven, if you call me fool, damn you! Burn in hell all of you  
think this Imperrech will protect you? Then may the Fog take you all!

their forefathers.

The hundreds of other cultures of Katraddia joined them in their frenzied migrations and even more from beyond who escaped west, south into Kashirya, or east into Kathun-Kai. What remained of Katraddia itself gave little resistance, the already disunited Imperials crumbling before them. The only resistance came from Governor Ioldon, who had long been battling over a dozen pretenders and warlords during the Civil War and who inherited his title from his father, who died from Self-Replicating Blood Magic.

Alongside him had died Ioldon's six brothers, four sisters, and eight grandchildren, as well as his entire extended family, all dying from the Civil War, Self-Replicating Blood Magic, Frodbrokna or the Fog. He would unite the last remnants of Katraddia's legions, its people, and their allies. His own wife was Sjalvolki, a political marriage to make peace with a raiding clan, and many Sjalvolki and other tribal peoples joined the Imperials instead of escaping alone.

What followed would become a hectic running battle south over the next decades. The tribals of the north poured south in chaotic hordes, attempting to find safety on the coast and constantly running into Imperials attempting the same. Both sides almost endlessly battled while also trying to escape and block the other off. While Ioldon gathered the survivors, the Sjalvolki too organized.

One would rise above all. He was the greatest warrior the Sjalvolki had ever known and their most cunning. It surprised many outsiders to find they equally celebrated him for his knowledge of culture and faith and love of spoken poetry. He was the finest statesman who had ever led them, one that spoke twelve languages and knew the value and the power of intrigue when necessary. He was glorious, and he was also compassionate, seemingly always finding proper solutions considered widely just, and sparing his enemies or treating them with dignity and respect as he destroyed them with masterful strategy.

He was Cenware, the man who would build the new era of the world, the one after Aversaria. Only as a teenager his father died within the Fog and his clan began their Dovahking. They were one of a hundred clans of the Daukeni culture, considered the most in-between the north and south Sjalvolki. As was the tradition of the Sjalvolki clans, each warrior and leader of his tribe came to prove their worth as the successor in a grand battle between all.

Cenware beat all twenty other contenders, tales saying without killing a single one. They were among the clan's greatest warriors; old chieftains three times his age with endless experience; young mercenaries returning to the clan from across the world; and even Cenware's own older brother, Eofwine.

### **The Fenvir Declaration**

*Cormag Fenrus had this declaration memorized by Desitrei 'Iron-Oak', a close  
of Cenware who Cormag removed the hand of and sent back to Cenware scarred  
Witch-Breaker declared the Fenvir tribe would not survive outside the Imperrech*

"Let it be known that Cenware 'Witch-Breaker' is a good boy, a wonder  
young lad who I'm sure has a daddy and a mommy proud of him some  
He has done such great things for his tribe, he's even such a good boy I  
helped other tribes.

"And if he ever dares threaten the Fenvir again, he shall never aid another  
only do I declare the 'Witch-Breaker' to be a pathetic whelp hardly cap

hunting a hare, but I declare him to be no Sjalvolki kin of mine. He has betrayed our people! He demands we hold hands with queer foreigners alongside Partic Magi as we would our closest friends, cheer on Kardwen as they feast on human flesh! He demands we go settle down on farms in castles, just like the weak and gluttonous Imperials that we replace!

"As he is no Sjalvolki, I have no intention to follow him! I, Cormag Fer clan Fenrus of the Fenvir tribes, declare Cenware to be a child! Perhaps some Sjalvolki in him somewhere, and perhaps when he grows up and the world he'll realize that there's a reason the Sjalvolki have survived w Kartharaddi and the Magi both haven't! We leave this Imperrech and the weak whelps who think foreigners are necessary to war the effeminate Imperials!

"Let it be known that our comrade Sjalvolki are not our enemies. But they weren't our enemies for the thousand years we have fought and beat on another before, and all should know that the lands of the Fenvir will be lands of the Fenvir, and no others! We shall go and conquer the east, as the 'Witch-Breaker' kills our people in the west!"

That's all he said Cenware, please, please get a healer. Please.

He led his tribe south into Aversaria and then used a mix of warfare and diplomacy to subjugate the other fleeing Sjalvolki tribes. He became the first to lead an army of all Sjalvolki in a single, unified clan. Their leaders bowed to him, and declared him the High King, the only to ever hold this title.

Cenware not only united the Sjalvolki, however. He called the Tribespact, bringing forth representatives from every Sjalvolki clan and the leaders of vastly different cultures and faiths from across the world. There Cenware made a vow. If they were to aid him and the Sjalvolki in their invasion into Aversaria as a unified force, then all would find equal treatment and could settle their tribes across Aversaria. After shrewd diplomacy and politicking, as well as several shows of power, they agreed. Tribes like the Kardwen, the Goans, and the Partic all agreed to follow Cenware south. The Sjalvolki Imperrech had reformed, not a true empire, but a temporary union of the northern peoples led by Cenware, with an oath to disband it once they had all settled upon the ashes of Aversaria.

Perhaps the Partic, of all these tribes, were the most notable. Legendary druids from the far north, so far distant that the Sjalvolki had only heard of them from some of the most well-traveled adventurers, they seemed suspiciously ready to join the Imperrech. In fact, they seemed more united in their desire to join than the Sjalvolki clans themselves, their seers taking commands from trees which apparently demanded they join. They would supply Cenware with the largest and most elite force of Magi remaining in the world, on a par with or perhaps stronger than the Aversarians themselves.

Cenware led the Imperrech against Ioldon and fought a running series of battles with him towards the Grey Passes that connected Katraddia with Kalathipsomi. The entrance into Malcois was too far, and the entrance around the Mayikprollan was cut off early by the Fog. The treacherous Grey Mountains were the only realistic route to find shelter from the Fog on the other side of the Clanmounts, the largest mountain range in the world.

### **Report on the Northern Tribals, No. 2**

*Letalagos Demetrilav 'Blood-Spike', a half-Aversarian half-Sjalvolki Legi tasked with making several reports of the deteriorating situation in Katraddia.*

For what they call the 'Fog eaters' I have little explanation. Many tribes have been lost in the Fog, but one of them has apparently somehow... me with it? The exact wording of this escapes me, and I can not think of a way to describe it in either mother Aversarian or in the more barbaric Sjalvolki ones.

Their humanity is debatable, seemingly worshipping strange amalgams of spirits within the Fog and with physical forms long twisted and mangled by exposure to it. The Fogbeasts treat them as kin, and I have never heard of one thinking independently. They are rare, their numbers likely in the thousands, and I have been convinced they are worth the cost of the war.

thousands, and I have been convinced they are myth for the past year since the raid nearly wiped out half of my unit.

We managed to capture three after they dragged away our wounded unknown purpose. To our surprise, the three proceeded to do everything within their power to kill themselves. They had no apparent care for promises of good treatment, even when we attempted to give it in nine different languages. One went so far as to, after being completely restrained, bite out his own tongue so that he may bleed to death.

While I can attempt to guess, judging by some of their markings and the way they had perhaps been once members of the Taloragei tribes, who I have seen a living member of since the arrival of the Fog. Several others, however, seemed to possess Legion tattoos. We know they feast upon the living, but I believe they may also have some strange ritual to twist the fate of their kin.

Whatever they are, I am thankful they are exceptionally rare and the worries here in the Fogswept lands. You're far more likely to die of one or be devoured by a Fogbeast than you are to encounter one. A rather reassuring, I know.

Cenware would slay Ioldon, and his only remaining son, Nicanoneus, would succeed him. Nicanoneus would declare himself as Governor Arch-Legon Nicanoneus, taking command of the various fleeing Legions and citizens by their authority as Governor after a brief power struggle. He had been born after Frodbrokna unleashed the Fog upon the world, allegedly on a day where Aervalr covered the sun, and had been leading soldiers before he had even grown the first hairs on his chin. His entire life had been war and death, of watching his homeland consumed by the Fog every day they spent on the trail.

He and Cenware would battle several more times before the Battle of the Grey Gate, where Cenware routed Nicanoneus and his forces north and forced them to brave the Fog to cross back into Aversaria. Nearly his entire force would wither away there, and while he would retreat from the Battle of the Grey Gate with nearly a hundred thousand strong, and enter Kalathipsomi with less than a tenth of that still living.

### **A Brief Report on Kalatisome**

*Likely written by scouts belonging to Kunigunde 'Eagle-Arrow', in a report to King Cenware, 1244 IS*

The locals say this land like 'Cal-ath-ip-so-me', though their language continues twisting my tongue. The Magi's travels name it the Clanlands, the many clans that once lived here. According to the histories we have uncovered, this land once belonged to a people named the Shevalings, who still live in the west and fight armies of skeletal leeches on top of flying with chicken heads. We haven't been able to figure out if that's just crazed-speak, though all agree that it is common knowledge here.

There is evidence that once this land was mighty, many great cities and human forests and have been long grown over. Not ancient ones either. Nobody tells us why, whatever happened to these cities happened before the Magi even first came here. Only sensible claim was that once there were many great cities, but a war between Magi and whatever empire sat here along with everyone else here a long while ago. Sound familiar, aye?

Aversarian control has mainly been about forestry and mining, as the wealthy in both wood and minerals. They are the settling types, like the Katraddians, but they are far more fancy here. They live in sparse settlements, often in old ruins, and many Shevalings apparently still have some power from when they once ruled these lands.

Most interesting thing here is the 'Living Wood'. The Partic you may take, Isaril, is telling me the trees here don't shut up and they're all crazy the time. Says that they got memories of different eras, with strange things and a god. I know how it sounds, but I did watch several of the trees uproot themselves and begin migrating south, walking upon their roots. Thought it was amazing, though then I realized the entire farkin' forest was running around and it took us three entire weeks to get out.

Meanwhile, Cenware crossed the Grey Passes, taking substantial losses but still coming out of the journey far fresher than Nicanoneus's refugees.

Kalathipsomi was in chaos. The warlord Demetrios 'Iron-Spike' Dethenax had tenuously held it together with his connections within Aversaria's many criminal organizations and assassins guilds and his brutal and oppressive rule at Aeschraes's blessing. So too had Aeschraes maintained some measure of control in Malcois and Opakhasia with the brutal Legon Karthyn Delenel and his forces, along with Delenel's protege, the sadistic Gorassos 'Skull-Taker'.

But during the Vilnian Assault, Legan Isacaea of State Legio XXI 'Axiaothea' declared Aeschraes the greatest threat to Aversaria in history. While many agreed that his destruction of Axiaothea proved him the stronger Magi and technically by law right to rule, his great evils and refusal to state he would not cast Self-Replicating Blood Magic again if he had the resources disturbed the nobility so much that Aversaria stood united against him. Her Legion had once been Aeschraes's own, Aeschraes having gifted it to his oldest brother after he had began the war, the Legion then going to one of his closest companions upon his brother's slaying by Axiaothea, who then betrayed him and went over to Axiaothea as he grew disillusioned with Aeschraes's cause. Isacaea had spent her time as Legan being hunted like a dog by Delenel, and her and what allies she could gather began an assault on Oraispol aiming to kill Aeschraes once and for all.

Aeschraes, now increasingly called the 'Lord of the Ashes', survived. His entire inner circle, however, did not. Not only did he lose his top Magi and lieutenants, along with his few remaining Legons and high nobles, but most important fell Iron-Spike and Delenel in one-on-one combat with Isacaea. Aeschraes would kill the wounded Isacaea after, but his realm finally collapsed into true anarchy, his authority gone with his two lieutenants. When the Sjalvolki entered Kalathipsomi, the civil war following Iron-Spike's death had already consumed the Governorate, and they easily swept aside what Legions remained.

First, before joining proper battle with the Imperials, Cenware diverted north. The Mayikprolollan remained in the mountains, its council overthrown by Arch-Magi Terrox, a former classmate of Aeschraes and Axiaothea. The Magocracy struggled forward, Frodbrokna having killed so many of its staff that they struggled to control their massive population of slaves. The pass into the Mayikprolollan remained a single great tunnel that brings travelers into the Academy under the mountains, and over a hundred Magi and other soldiers still guarded it against any intruder.

Cenware, however, did the unthinkable. With magic that had only been told of in tales, his Seers brought Cenware and a small force of his greatest Sjalvolki warriors into the Fog. They called this art Fog Magic, that which slowly takes the sight and brings force madness as it manipulates the mind. Cenware reached the mountains through the Fog and he and his men then scaled them, climbing practically vertically at points as they pioneered Aeras's largest mountains to break into the ancient fortress.

He eventually did, and they ambushed the Magi of the Mayikprolollan from above. He was not there to conquer, however. The Mayikprolollan was useless to settle in and removed from his own forces, with little chance to strike him. Instead, he wished for knowledge. He would free the slaves of the Mayikprolollan to bolster his forces, and he and his men would carve a bloody swathe through the Magi as they stole every ancient artifact and piece of knowledge sequestered under the mountain.

When he left, he had done the impossible. The first man to unite the Sjalvolki, the first to unite the northern peoples, and now the first to sack the Mayikprolollan. In the Sjalvolki tradition, he was more than worthy of wearing a nickname, and his warriors declared him to be Cenware 'Witch-Breaker'. He returned south, and his

Magi, now equipped with the largest stockpile of magical lore in the Continent, invaded Aversaria proper. His brother Eofwine took a force and entered back into the Fog in the east, on a special mission from Cenware, led by Jarogg 'Crow-Eye', Cenware's personal Magi.

At Kresox's Grave it is said that Arch-Legon Kresox surrendered the four remaining legions under his command and all his servants as slaves to Cenware in return for his own safe passage. Cenware and the Sjalvolki were not ones for slavery, and it is said that the Witch-Breaker accepted the terms. He then declared that as the owner of the legionaries and Kresox's followers, he ordered them to lay down their weapons and live lives of peace. He then freed them all from slavery, and in an ironic punishment for his cowardice, had Kresox 'safely escorted' to his former slaves. They then tore him limb from limb, ending the last organized resistance to the Sjalvolki in Kalathipsomi.

He briefly fought north and south, tribes settling or preparing to take the most fertile lands to the south. They also freed great numbers of slaves, recruiting even more people into the Imperrech as they broke the chains that held them.

Nicanoneus fought Cenware in several losing battles in the north, forced to work with the northern rivals, Governor Methiad Dethlycan and Oulnir Gurdurbok in their Black Mountain War for men and supplies to battle Cenware. He would gain the only victory in battle against Cenware himself in history at the Battle of Bergkoga. Cenware would reverse this however and drive Nicanoneus back north in subsequent battles, who blamed his allies and struck down Governor Dethlycan and Gurdurbok, taking control of the Black Mountains. He would then invade west into Chevalie in the Ash War, fighting a long and gruelling campaign against the Chevaliens and their unexpected allies in the arriving Partic Calagonii, who had broken off from the Imperrech for unknown reasons. Nicanoneus faced defeat and a Partic Magi disfigured him with fire during the last battles.

Nicanoneus was not the greatest of swordsmen, but he was an expert tactician and politician. He turned his disfigurement into propaganda, having a mask forged from glass and his armor done in Aversarian colors of black, gold and red. He declared he had, in fact, been born on the day of an eclipse, and that on the day of his birth the Purest himself handed him to his family before a crowd of weeping First Men. The Purest had sent him from the heavens to one day rule Aversaria, and he named himself the 'Black Sun'.

His legions were in tatters, his nobles unruly, the natives increasingly unsure of their alliance, and his own children despised him for his cold and unflinching parenting. They said that Nicanoneus only felt emotion once in his life, when he met a camp follower on the campaign and immediately fell in love. Her death in childbirth would mean he would never love another, especially not his children, each of whom he viewed as a unique failure. Nicanoneus declared that no matter how likely he was to fail against the Sjalvolki, they would know his name before his death.

Aversaria seemed in her final death rattles when the realm united for one last effort. The Sjalvolki marched south in significant force, preparing to cross into Etepezea and the Aversarian heartland. The remaining State Legions of Aversaria organized a grand army from hundreds of warlords, local forces, mercenaries, and other rogue legions. The largest gathering of Aversarian soldiers in history would march north to stop the Sjalvolki at a place named the Elysian Pass, along with the last remaining elite and non-partisan forces of Aversaria.

Many scholars named what followed, the Battle of the Elysian Pass, as the day that Aversaria died. An unmitigated disaster, the Sjalvolki would play the disunited Aversarians against one another and Cenware's Magi would unleash the Fog on the unsuspecting legions, many of which had refused to even believe that the Fog was real. Not only this, but Eofwine's force appeared out of the Fog and into Malcois, where they cut off much of the

Aversarian's reinforcements and opened a second front with which flanked the attacking force. Nearly every legion that fought was so damaged that they would disband after the fighting, an entire generation of Aversarian soldiers dying in a single day. The Sjalvolki would face losses in the low hundreds.

With the path clear, the Sjalvolki began their great migration into Aversaria. The Sjalvolki claim that the Witch-Breaker was the only one who refused to celebrate their brilliant victory. Contemporaries would claim he had spoken a melancholy poem about the death of so old an Empire, evil or not, upon watching the legions collapse at the Pass.

Réné 'the Black Bastard' den va Seignon would be one of the few survivors from the Aversarian side of the conflict. The bastard son of High King Gardfrei den va Seignon of Chevalie, he had left his homelands in order to lead mercenaries abroad, which had become the Marcher's staple export. At the Elysian Pass the Aversarians had hired him and his Band of Bastards to battle the Sjalvolki, but they ended up forced to cut through both sides to escape the Fog.

The Fog had consumed their fellow Marchers in the Company of the Crownman's Sword, however. Réné and his men would turn and fight their way back to their fellow mercenaries and then cut a way out together. Legends claim Cenware saluted Réné for this from across the field, declaring the Marchers to be the 'only men he

### **Fear the Magi, Page 3**

*A short treatise on Magi by Chevalien Waymother of Nullification Jenevet  
Polnton, 832 IS*

But why does our realm, so glorious and beautiful in people and culture, despise the Magi? I say that this is a lie, we do not despise the Magi, we simply know of their dangers.

Tales speak of when we first came to our homeland, those we now call the Ojejnyicans were not just petty criminals and slumdweller, but could build great might empires and kingdoms. Many of them were magocracies, and the Ojejnyicans carried an obsession with death and magic. Endless wars between the Marchers bittered us to them, and their folly created the Liches which now kill so many of our kin.

Or was it, perhaps, the ancient ones? They have different names now, but the ancient devil who is said to have tried to subjugate the free peoples. Their name was Katarnoax, others say Varsigeks, either way, Good King Bastione slew a dark and evil Magi king who once more attacked us.

And then, of course, we have Aversaria. The Magi of the south possessed great power, uncounting, and stole the lands which the people of Chevalie rightfully owned from the people there. Many claim that there was no reason for the Magi to come to the people to tread so south, but was it better the Aversarians marched north? The backwards people of what they now call Kalathipsomi needed a guiding hand from their betters, instead they received slavery and subjugation from the Magi. War unending, in which they slew the people and the hippogriffs and killed many Marchers, is it any surprise that we fear them?

Some nobles think it fashionable to have a pet 'Court Magi', with which they 'consult' over matters of darkness or flaunt them around for power. Cast them out! They say pogroms of the merchant quarters in which the Magi are hunted are foul and backwards, I say they are righteous! Let us continue this cycle of casting out the Magi, and then entertaining them when they return, it is our duty to force them out, for they only bring death.

fought that day'.

He returned home to a troubled Chevalie. His father, Gardfrei, had once been a powerful High King, who had defeated the Black-Gold League to take the throne after the assassination of his father, and had ruled as a fair and just High King. His father had apparently spoken one day to a Gastanwoder Witch, however, who spoke to him of ancient prophecies and futures yet to come. Gardfrei declared his intentions to go on a great and mysterious quest to the north, that seemed to consume more and more of him as the years passed and time went on. As he

aged, his court and his children demanded that he declare his successor, for Chevalie did not simply pass from ruler to child, instead it went to whoever could prove best at protecting the Marcher people.

Gardfrei famously took his crown from his head, broke it to pieces in his hands, and threw them at his scheming court. He declared whoever pieced it back together could wear it for all he cared and then disappeared on his mysterious journey north with many knights and companions.

Chevalie collapsed in the aftermath, for Chevalie is a land which only the strongest may rule. While it has laws and tradition, and High Kings strive for legal claim and authority, the right of power ultimately guides succession. If one can not hold their throne, what hope do they have against Liches or the always threatening Magi? And if they can not legitimize it, what hope do they have to unite the realm in crisis? With Gardfrei gone with no clear heir, and a history of endless civil wars for the highest throne ending in its multi-century dissolution, Gardfrei's children fought, and René landed upon her shores and declared his intentions to reunite the throne.

In the south, however, the Marchers had thrived. World renowned mercenaries and Anti-Magi, foreigners could find Marcher merchants and sellswords in every port where there was a war. Across Sarradon they and the Aversarians both had made great gains in tearing riches from the native Sarradonians, and the influx of Agionists and their breaking from Aversaria had led to the destruction of the final Ritualist warlords.

Ḥārthah ibn Sarradon, however, declared it the time for the Wardenites to begin a grand age of resistance. His master, Mamur Adabyn, disagreed, however. He called for caution, pointing out that the Continentals would devour themselves, and that the Wardenites needed to recover and strike when the moment was right. Ḥārthah was his greatest and most loyal general, but broke with the Mamur when the Agionist Order of Saint Calysto's Key captured his wife and forced her into slavery in their plantations of 'petinents'. Ḥārthah begged to be given a force to rescue her, but when Adabyn yet again guided caution, he gathered up the men himself and struck.

The Agionists would defeat him after he discovered his wife already dead, and they threw him into the sea to die. Somehow, he survived and washed up in eastern Sarradon, then escaped from chasing Agionist and Imperial patrols to the deserts where he took shelter with the nomadic tribes. The desert people had once risen in a great wave and used great and strange magics, and pledged to support Ḥārthah if he would return the lands of the east which they had once conquered.

Ḥārthah agreed, and they formed a great alliance that rapidly conquered the remains of the Aversarian colonies and drove back the Agionist orders, declaring his name to be ibn Sarradon and all the south his children. What opposes him, however, is dark and unknown. Maybe once greed had corrupted the Agionists, or the Aversarians, or extremism and zealotry, but now something darker seemed to pull the strings. The Order of the Forgotten Saint controlled all other orders, but many wondered who controls the puppet masters.

Some say that one day the northerners will rule the Shattered Coast and form a hundred new cultures and religions to supplant the old. That they will settle into castles like those they conquered and declare new feudal orders inspired by the Chevaliens. That the Wardenites will defeat the Agionists and the Ritualists will rise in a great new wave of rebellion. And that the Fog may one day stop, or more likely consume the world.



## Directory

### Short Stories

[\*The Eye and the Conqueror\*](#)

A great conqueror of Sarradon in ages long past discovers an eldritch being beneath the sands

[\*Forgotten Saints\*](#)

An Agionist rebel's descent in the final years of their rebellion

## Lore Documents

[\*Dramatis Personae\*](#)

A directory of every character mentioned in *Godherja* media.

[\*Encyclopedia\*](#)

A list of helpful terms from the *Godherja* universe.

[\*Original Lore Document\*](#)

The original Lore Document for *Godherja: The Dying World*.

## Community Links

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